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Cross Media Communication Planning for Small Businesses

by Rockie A. Hunter

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Science in the School of Print Media

in the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences of the Rochester Institute of Technology

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Primary Thesis Advisor: Professor Chris Bondy

Secondary Thesis Advisor: Professor Patricia Sorce

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Abstract

The evolution of media communication formats and the focus on personalized customer interactions has created the need for effective planning and deployment of information from business to consumer. Research suggested that the area of communication media, formal marketing planning, and data collection are still in its early stages for small businesses.

This research targeted 850 small businesses in New Hampshire aimed to enhance knowledge of small business marketing habits. The analysis of the survey data found that communication habits had an emphasis on low cost options with low integration of formal planning. Data collection also posed an issue for small businesses as participants gathered data in low frequencies.

The researcher concluded that small businesses focus on internal usage of resources when developing plans and deploying communication to clients. Furthermore, the researcher introduced the concept of an integrated application to promote planning, data collection and Cross Media communication for small businesses.

Chapter I

Introduction and Statement of Problem

Small Business Marketing Problems

Small Businesses, defined here forth as a business with less than 500 employees, account for roughly 99% of all employer based firms across the United State (Kobe, 2007). While these businesses comprise an overwhelming percentage of the job share in America, they also suffer from constantly shifting cycles of life and death of companies. An estimated 552,600 new businesses opened while 660,900 businesses closed during 2009; which showed a loss of nearly 108,300 businesses during this time (US Census Bureau).

The lack of resources and the high pace for which technology is being introduced present many problems for small business owners. Following current communication medium trends and general future planning account for many of the issues faced by small business owners and managers (Tariq and Wahid, 2011, p. 1063). The research that surrounded the areas of small business marketing planning, communication media, and branding has been of increased interest in the field of academia.

Models for effective practice in these areas have been attempted in various fields but have yet to fully integrate with each respective area for a cross discipline approach of communicating with new and returning customers.

Interest in Subject

The overwhelming presence of small businesses in the United States, specifically in New Hampshire, presents an untapped area for marketers and media architects to engage in cross media communications. The interest from owners and managers about learning the new communication channels exists within the small business sector (Fenton, 2011).

The unique operational behaviors of small business should be utilized as a tool to better enhance their current model for customer engagement. My interest into further research with small business aims to unite the areas of market planning, communication deployment and branding to form a base for a new model in small business operations. The model created should translate easily to owners and managers during their marketing deployment, to ensure adequate and effective use, while still allowing each business to operate under its own unique personal insight and identity.

Chapter II

Theoretical Basis

Small businesses share an overwhelming portion of the economic environment of the United States. Over the course of 16 years, between 1993 and 2009, they were assessed to control 65% of the new job creation experienced in the United States. (Parson and Tracy, 2008). However, because of their unique operational structure, many small businesses only survived for short durations of time.

Many independent factors can be associated with what effects the life cycle of these businesses. Literature around this topic that existed at the beginning of the research had begun to seek out methods to help better understand the operational characteristics of small business. Marketing communication and innovation adoption are the two key theoretical basis for which the research built upon.

Small Business Innovation Adoption

Small businesses function as unique entities, existing as an extension of the owner or manager's individual entrepreneurial ambitions and beliefs. Research into the specific characteristics of an owner and how they react to the potential adoption of innovations, in various forms, was used. Research conducted by Peltier, Zhao and Schibrowsky (2012), (Diffusion of an Innovations Model), provided background methodology concerning the decision factors that attribute to the integration of technology by an organization.

The theoretical connection established a link between the individual characteristics of the owner or manager of a small business and the adoption of new innovations. The connections were broken down into categories including perceived advantages, existing knowledge, and financial considerations (Peltier, Zhao and Schibrowsky, 2012, p. 411-416). The model of innovation provided was used during the consideration of surveying subjects for further information regarding cross media communication integration and how owners and managers perceived this innovation.

Marketing Models

The literature suggested a lack of formal marketing planning undertaken by the owner or manager of small businesses (Tariq and Wahid, 2011, p. 1063). O'Donnell's (2011, p. 790), Small Firm Marketing Activities, model formed the basis of knowledge of known trends in how small firms market themselves across various areas of operation; including new customer acquisition and retention activities, information mining, and management of resources.

This information was used to understand the activities of small businesses in progressing through a life cycle of a customer. The framework of activities were exemplar to the concept of a proactive cross media communications model. The hopes of which were to form a more fundamentally sound method for businesses to communicate with returning and new customers.

The combination of these two theories about small business operations were used to create a framework that would best represent practices that should be undertaken by

small businesses to become more knowledgeable and aware of the proactive use of cross media communication. Peltier, Zhao and Schibrowsky (2012) formed the foundation for which education to small businesses should be undertaken. By understanding the characteristics present when an owner or manager made a decision to integrate new technology, inference on how to educate these individuals in marketing can take form.

O'Donnells' (2011) model represented the current activities small firms have knowledge of and use during their current operations. With the two theories combined together a method of communication can be derived on how to incorporate a sound marketing strategy with increased adoption from small businesses.

Chapter III

Preliminary Review of the Literature

Background Literature

The preliminary literature review began with an investigation into the current trends in communication mediums. An outlook at the current and projected usages of media and the shifts involved formulated the structure of how marketing communication is set to continue to evolve.

The discussion continued with an exploration of the marketing processes that are prevalent in small business environments. All sources, that have been reviewed, agreed upon the uniqueness of the operation and marketing undergone by small businesses. The established understanding emphasized that small businesses are not simply miniaturized versions of their large business counterparts (Parrot, 2010, p. 185).

Further exploration of the small business operations and marketing was reviewed. Articles focused on responses from the point of view owner or managers of the businesses were the primary material reviewed. The understanding for these targets is that these two positions are directly in charge of the company and were able to provide insight into the use of resources, specifically pertaining to marketing and advertising. Further information reviewed the use of “Life Cycles” by businesses during their planning stages.

Current Issues and Trends

The marketing communication environment is in another evolutionary phase of its existence. The continued advances in technology has contributed to the introduction of new forms of marketing communication that had not previously existed.

The hold of the print industry on the primary share of advertising communications is continuing to decline. Between the start of the new millennium up to the current state of printed advertisements has dropped to around 3% in Magazines and 15% in Newspaper distribution (Ensley, 2011, p. 2).

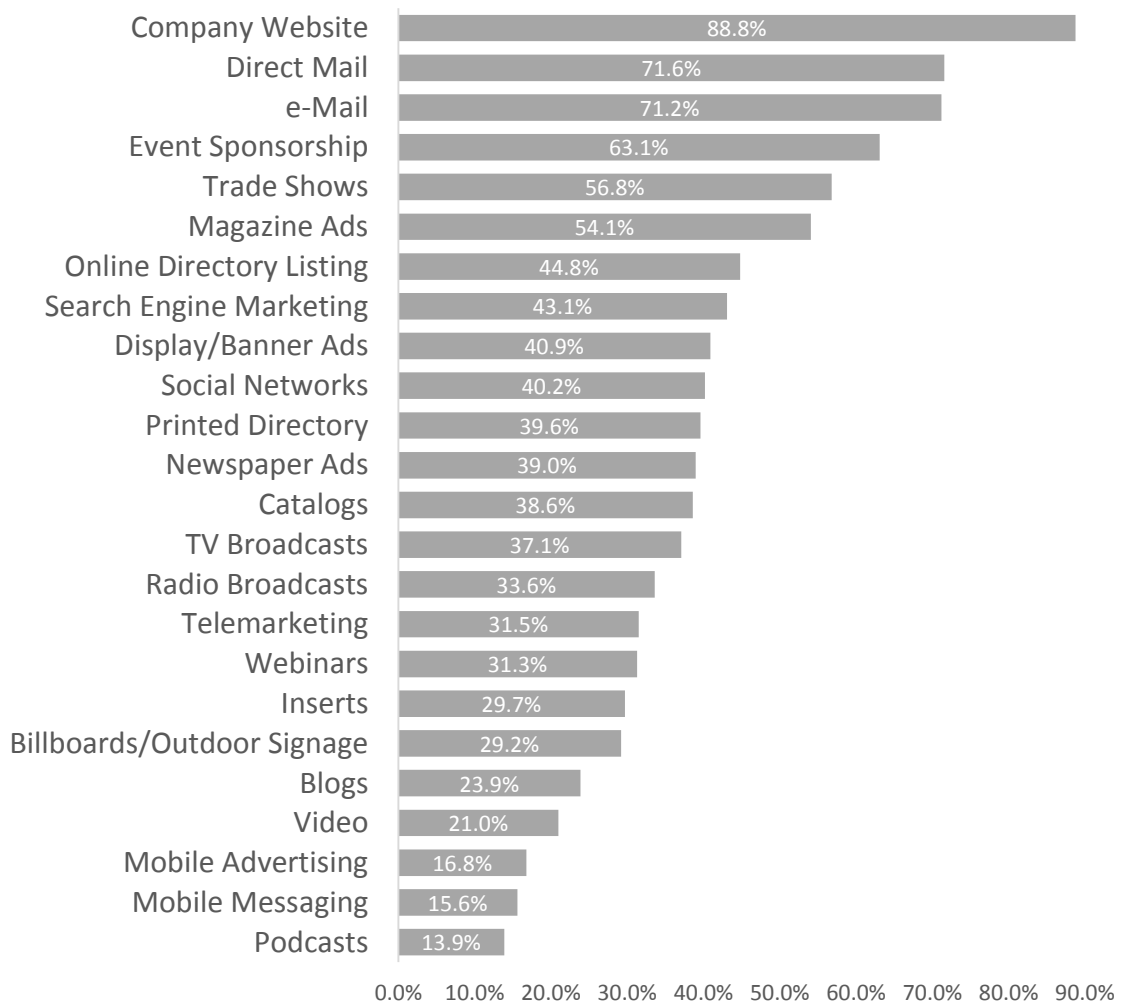
The loss to these two printed mediums has been reallocated in the form of Online advertising. The inception of the internet has allowed for increased range of communication and has opportunities in many forms to market and advertise a business. The expected increase of the Online medium to represent 15% of the advertising medium marketing illustrates this perceived opportunity (Ensley, 2011, p. 2).

Furthermore, digital communication represent a fundamentally large section of the marketing ecosystem. Beyond online communications, the introduction of the tablet device around 2010 began to gather support as a source of marketing and advertising. At its current state, tablets only represent 1% of the ad spend market compared to the usage rate of tablets representing 10% of the time spend activity (Ensley, 2011, p. 4).

This trend, as it pertained to Graphic Communication Providers, has shown a

decrease in Traditional Media and reallocation of resources to Digital Media. Bondy et al. (2010) found that Traditional Media, specifically printed materials, are being overtaken by the use of digital communication. Figure 1 below illustrates the media usage of marketers in the current economic environment.

Figure 1. InfoTrends Media Usage Analysis



Current Marketing Models

Small businesses encounter many limitations that are not problematic in larger

organizations, including fiscal limitations, marketing knowledge and planning and constricted time frames. While it has been established that marketing differences between small business and large business exists, there is acknowledgment that many practices undertaken by larger business while communication planning can be integrated into small business models (O'Donnell, 2011, p. 782).

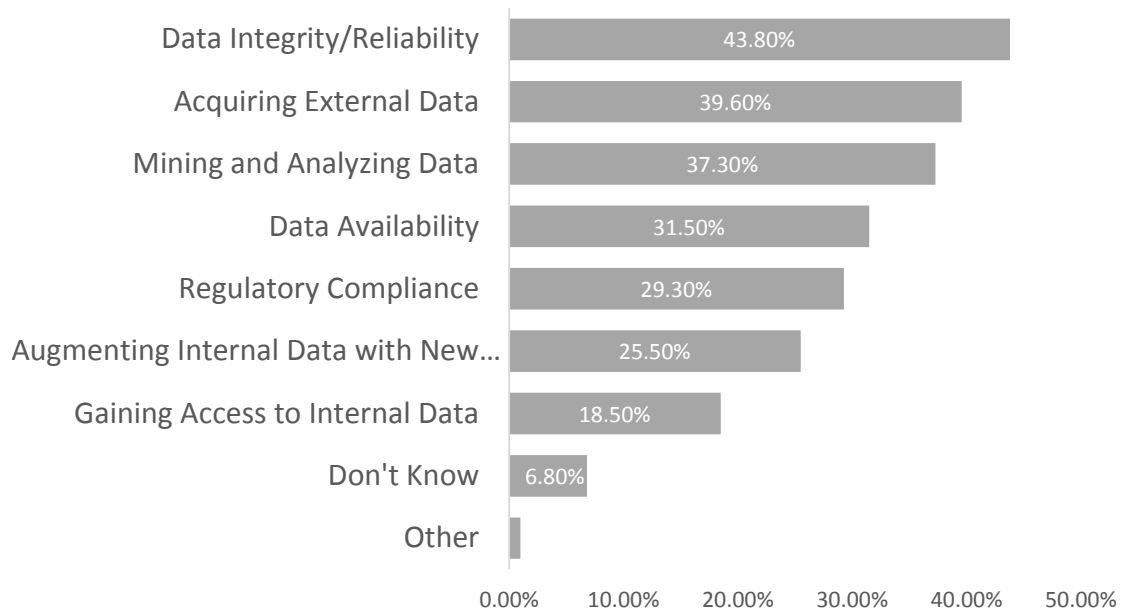
Larger businesses have a formal approach to their marketing planning, it is recognized that a lack of formal planning is one of the many areas that affect small businesses success. The resounding theme that is apparent across the literature is a lack of sufficient and adequate planning. When the small business does undergo formal planning strategies, many participants of previous research surveys suggest that they only loosely followed these plans (Tariq and Wahid, 2011, p. 1063). It was also observed that if planning had been undertaken, it was done so under a limited scope and only broadcast initiatives for near future endeavors (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012, pg. 105)

Customer Life Cycle. The lack of planning for long term goals presented another problem for small business growth. The use of models for better customer interaction can be interwoven into this category of operational malpractice. Parrott's (2011) findings while surveying small business owners reveals an overarching lack of efficient data and information collection during customer interactions.

Furthermore, data collection presents other barriers of use for small businesses. While different in other aspects of marketing and advertising, the aggregation and use of customer data is a problem faced by all sizes of business. Research has shown that even

larger organizations cite that the collection of data through non-internal ventures poses a challenge for their acquisition of data (Bondy et al., 2010). Figure 2 below illustrates the challenges faced when it pertains to the collection of client data.

Figure 2. Challenges Pertaining to Data



Without sound information about customer activities, the business owners are unable to keep track of where customers are along their respective customer cycle. This presented issues in the realm of customer retention and the overall growth of their customer base.

Relationship Marketing. Previous research indicated a paradigm that was inherent in small business operations. Relationship Marketing, defined as an emphasis on forming strong personal relationships with clients and associates through informal interactions (Hultman and Shaw, 2003, p. 38), is the primary resource used by owners and managers

in marketing activities. This reliance on forming personal relationships limits the scopes of how businesses engage new and returning clients beyond close proximity interactions.

This approach limited small businesses and caused them to fall into continued use of familiar practices, rather than the exploration of new options available for their future (Parrott, 2010, p. 198). Beyond this, without formal evaluation of the effects of marketing and advertising, the businesses are unaware of what forms of communication are best used for their marketing activities.

Multiple Channel Communications

The shift in the marketing communication segments has an impact on how small businesses compete to grow and maintain clientele. The literature presented focuses on the impact and increased potential available when multiple channels of communication are used in tangent with one another. The benefits that beseech small organizations, in most cases, were that their geographic locations permitted the continued use of printed materials to supplement their communication needs (Tariq and Wahid, 2011, p. 1063)

The increased rise of a Cross Media approach to marketing has been of interest for small businesses. The rise of social media, mobile, and email contact methods are present in the minds of small business owners and managers (Fenton, 2011). Continued refinement and advances in communication technology presents new opportunities for these businesses. Social media represents an avenue to stay in communication with customers in this virtual age. However, the ever present issues of inadequate planning and lack of resources prevent businesses from incorporating paid advertising usage.

Small Business Brand Management

Small businesses that followed a well-established and thought out brand management plan helped to differentiate themselves within their respective market segments (Spence and Essoussi, 2008, p. 1038). Following a strategic brand orientation, the owner or manager were able to effectively understand how to communicate with their clientele efficiently.

Branding in small business undertakes a personal representation of the owner and is more an extension of their beliefs and values. The management of their brand should be taken to any form of media for which they represent themselves, whether it is on their website, social media page or any form of media in which they communicate.

(Spence and Essoussi, 2008, p. 1048).

Conclusion

Small businesses represent an untapped avenue for cross media ventures. While the technology is constantly evolving and changing the way companies communicate with their consumers, a continually expanding gap is present in the form of small business communications. Perceived as expensive and too risky, marketing for small business is essential for the continued sustainability and potential growth for the business.

The literature reviewed established that fiscal and knowledge based limitations of small business owners and managers are the primary deterrents for marketing communications. Continued research into how to effectively express a sound marketing

scheme for small businesses would aid in bettering the economic situations that many of these companies find themselves in. The construction of a strategic brand and marketing model is the intention of the continued research into this business environment.

Chapter IV

Research Objective

This research developed an increased understanding of the marketing practices undertaken by small businesses in the state of New Hampshire. The nature of this study is to analyze the current state of planning and marketing deployment for small businesses. The researcher surveyed small businesses (companies with less than 250 employees) to understand the extent of which businesses create and follow plans, methods of customer acquisition and retention, and the media channels used to communicate with their clients. The analysis of this research formulated recommendations on how to better utilize formal planning for the retention and growth of small businesses, as well as established a model of effective advertising deployment to best engage new and returning customers.

Research Questions

1. What were the current advertising media usage undergone by small businesses in New Hampshire and what effected these choices?
2. What planning activities were utilized for marketing to clients and how often did plans get created?
 - a. What sort of resources were used when businesses engaged in formal planning?
3. How often did businesses engage in formal data collection on customers and

does this data collection have an effect on marketing decisions.

4. Was there a relationship between customer growth and marketing and advertising decisions?

H0 – There were no significant relationships between growth and non-growth businesses and the marketing and advertising variables.

H1 – There were significant relationships between growth and non-growth businesses and the marketing and advertising variables.

5. Was there a relationship between years in operation and marketing and advertising decisions?

H0 – There were no significant relationships between years in operation and marketing and advertising decisions.

H1 – There were significant relationships between years in operation and marketing and advertising decisions.

Chapter V

Methodology

Qualitative analysis provided insight into the planning operations, data gathering and media deployment that small businesses engaged. The analysis of data provided by small businesses located in New Hampshire were acceptable for research because the information gathered represented a range of marketing planning and communication operations through various economic environments. Quantitative analysis assisted in forming relationships between business growth demographics and marketing decisions.

Data Collection

A random sample of 850 small businesses located across New Hampshire were selected by the use of random selection from the population of small firms in the state. The desired respondents were owners or managers of business to customer firms that have less than 500 employees. The information about current practices for planning and marketing communication were gathered by the use of an organized survey deployed through an online surveying tool.

Initial contact between researcher and respondents were established through physical mail and followed by the use of email as the means of communication. Email was selected to further enhance the response rate of the survey based on trends showing a significant increase in returned responses from digital communication. The full structure of the survey can be viewed in Appendix I.

Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis of this survey analyzed the results received for the communication media choices, factors for selection, formal marketing planning, extent of planning reach, and customer data collection. The dependent variables for the qualitative aspect of the research were customer growth and years in operation of a business. The independent variables were the frequency of advertising, the communication medium, and rate of customer data collection, and the use and duration of marketing planning. Hypotheses were created and tested using computer software to better understand the relationship between independent variables in small businesses.

The categorical nature of all the variables required the use of descriptive statistics for analysis. The statistics required further evaluation by use of the Chi Square procedure to establish significant relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Conclusions were drawn using descriptive statistics for qualitative data and Crosstab and Chi Squared Tests were used for quantitative analysis of recoded qualitative data.

Variables for Chi Square Tests were recoded from the preliminary qualitative data. Dependent variables of “Growth” and “Non growth” were formed by grouping “Major Growth”, “Slight Growth”, and “Growth” responses and “Stayed Same”, “Slight Decline”, and “Major Decline” respectively. “Years in Operation” were recoded into ranges from “1 – 10 Years”, “11 – 20 Years”, and “20 + Years” based on the original six options. The dependent variables were categorized using the same method of combining “Never” and “Rarely” into “Low”, “Occasionally” and “Often” into “Medium”, and “Frequently” and “Constantly” into “High” clusters.

Chapter VI

Results

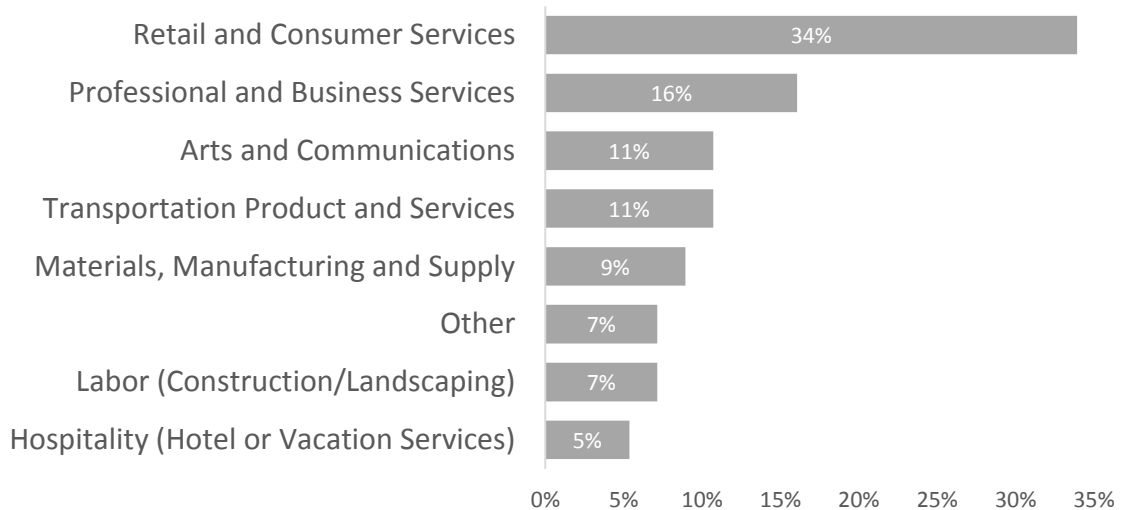
I. Statistics Description

Industrial Sector Demographic Responses

Of the 850 businesses contacted a final total of 56 responded to the survey. Approximately 8 industrial sectors were defined after recoding the original category responses from the survey. The “Other” category remained to include businesses in dual sectors or who did not provide adequate details to their industrial sector.

Approximately 34% of participants were in “Retail and Consumer Services” while “Professional and Business Services” represented 16%. “Arts and Communications” and the “Transportation Product and Services” represented 11% each. The three sectors of “Materials Manufacturing and Supply”, “Labor (Construction/Landscaping)”, “Other” received 9%, 7%, and 7% respectively. “Hospitality (Hotel or Vacation Services)” represented the smallest sector at 5% of results. Figure 3 below depicts Industrial Demographic results.

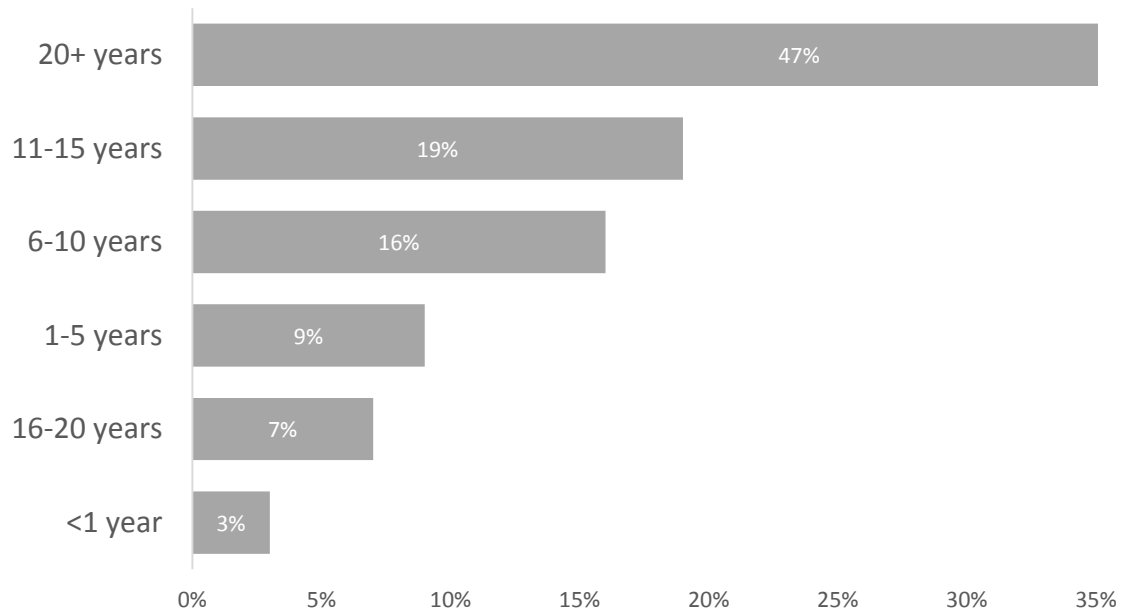
Figure 3. Industrial Demographic of Respondents



Years in Operation

Almost half (47%) of the respondents were from businesses that have been in operation for more than 20 years. The second and third largest group represented were businesses within the 11-15 years and 6-10 years with response percentages at 19% and 16% respectively. Businesses within the 1-5 years in operation had a response of 9% and 7% of participants were from within the 16-20 years range. Only 3% of respondents were in operation for less than 1 year. Figure 4 below illustrates the results received for the demographic of years in operation.

Figure 4. Demographic Responses Based on Years in Operation



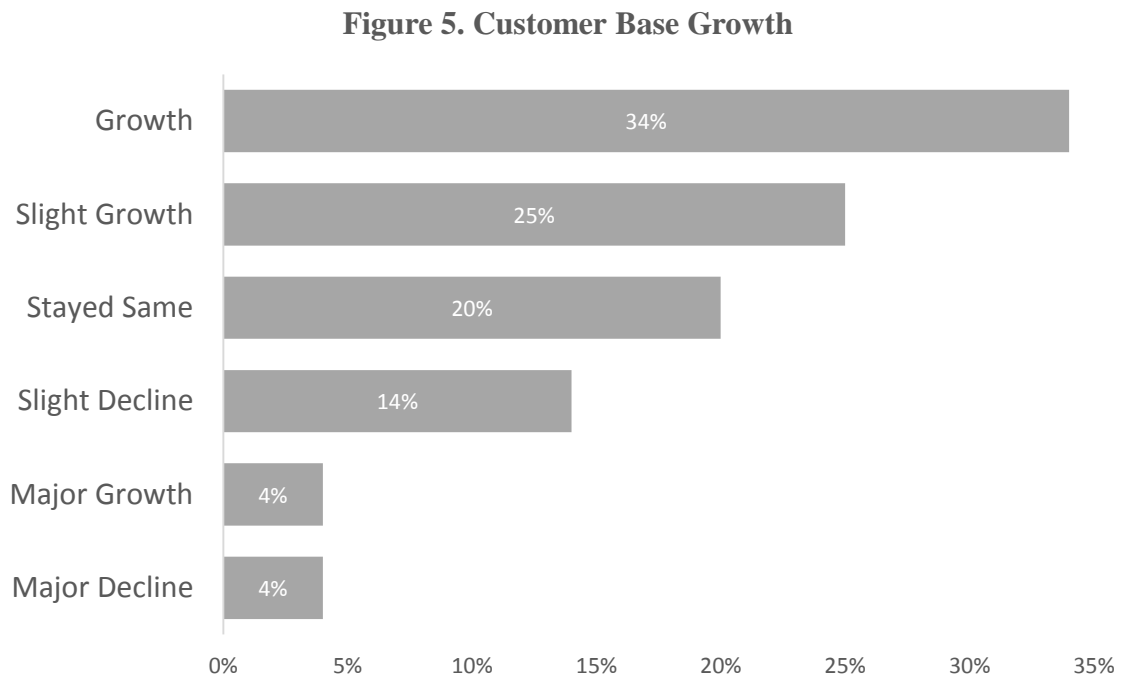
Demographic Growth Responses

The last question focused on demography and had respondents answer how their businesses grew in operational areas over the course of the last two years. Participants were asked about the Customer Base, Employee Size (Total # of employees), Geographic Reach (Total # of miles), Products/Services Offered, Number of Operations, and Building Size growth using a Likert scale survey. Responses for Customer Base were included for use in later statistical testing, the remaining responses can be found in Appendix II.

Customer Base Growth.

Roughly 63% of the participants reported growth in their customer base with 34% responding to the “Growth”. Roughly 25% cited a “Slight Growth” with 4% responding to “Major Growth”. Approximately 20% cited that their customer base stayed the same. Roughly 18% of respondents felt that their customer base had suffered decline with 14%

noticing a “Slight Decline” and 4% citing “Major Decline”. Figure 5 is a graphical representation of the responses provided for “Customer Base” growth.



Media Usage and Effects on Selection

Research Question I examined the advertising media usage by small businesses in New Hampshire. A total of 54 out the 56 participants answered all aspects of the Question 4 of the survey with only 2 respondents avoiding the subsection of “Distributing Mobile Update”. Additionally, a total of 13 respondents stated that they used some “Other” method of communication with clients with a total of 10 providing a written response of the medium they used.

Results of the seven subsections, including “Other” responses, showed a varied mixture of media outlets used by the businesses and are included in Appendix III. The

following paragraphs show the results for “High Usage” media and the factors that decide on communication media.

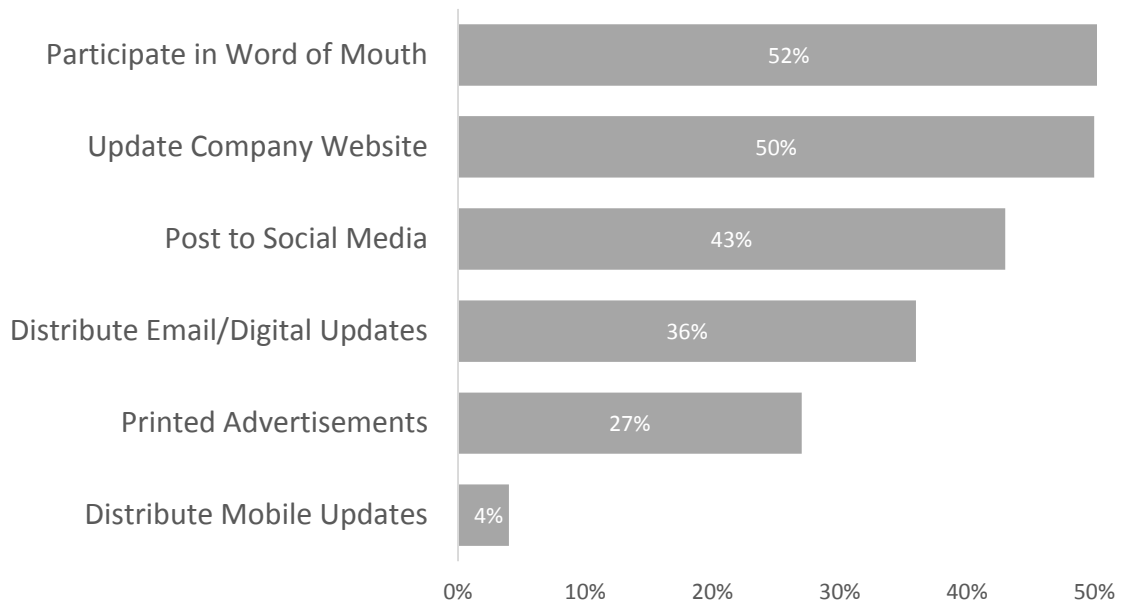
High Usage Communication Media

Results for the usage of the communication media were combined into two categories of “High” and “Low” usage from the six options provided in the survey. “High” usage were the combined results for “Constantly”, “Frequently”, and “Often” responses and “Low” usage were combined from “Occasionally”, “Rarely”, and “Never”.

Results demonstration a grouping between the top responses of “Participate in Word of Mouth Interactions” and “Update Company Website” with 52% and 50% of results respectively. With roughly 43% results for “Post to Social Media” and 36% for “Distribute Email/Digital Updates”; these media formed the average usage grouping. “Distribute Mobile Updates” (4%) and “Create/Distribute Printed Materials” (27%) were the least used communication media.

There was approximately 48% difference between the most used method, “Word of Mouth”, and least, “Distribute Mobile Updates”. The differences between least used and averagely used were 9% while 7% between most used and averagely used was observed. Results for “High Usage” media are illustrated below in Figure 6.

Figure 6. High Usage Communication Media



Factors for Marketing Material Decisions

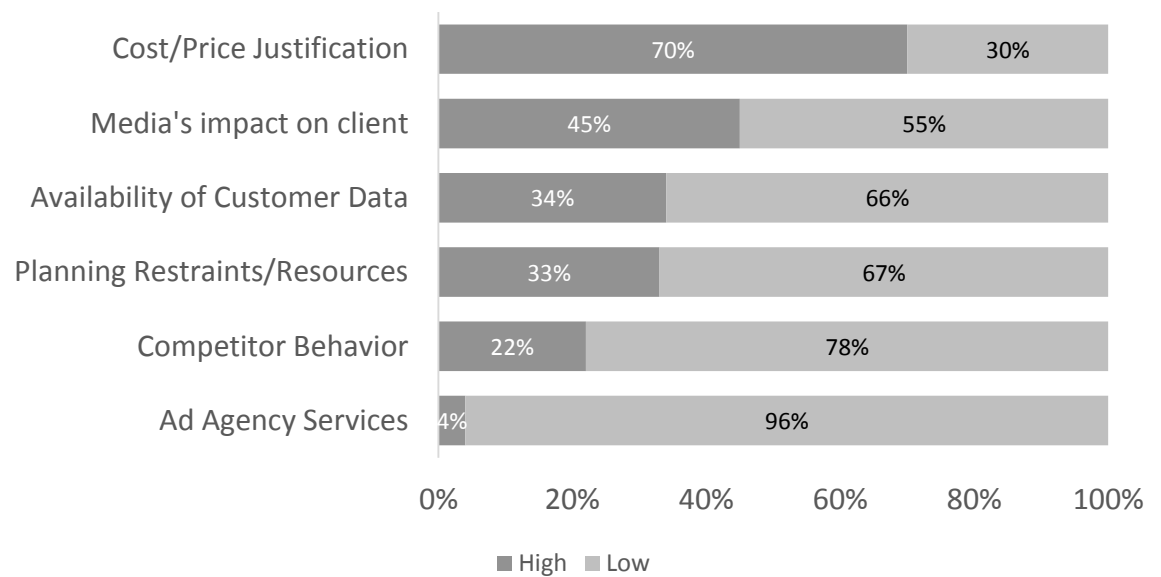
Question 5 of the survey asked participants what factors affected their choice in their communication media used to contact clients. Data was gathered using a Likert scale from “Never” to “Constantly”. The data gathered were combined into “Low”, and “High” affects by the same methods as results from “High Usage” media above.

“Low” effect when making decisions on most communication media were received with the exception of “Cost/Price Justification”. The use “Ad Agency Services” showed the least consideration with approximately 96% of results received for “Low” effect. Data received for “Cost/Price Justification” had the largest effect on their communication decisions with a total of 70% of results received for the “High”.

“Competitor Behavior” a “Low” effect factor with 78% of responses received.

The closest difference between effects and decision making was viewed for “Media’s Impact on Client” with “Low” (55%) and “High” (45%). “Availability of Customer Data” and “Planning Constraints/Resources” received roughly the same response percentages with 66% and 67%, respectively for “Low” affect. Figure 7 below illustrates the data gathered for factors that affect decisions about communication media.

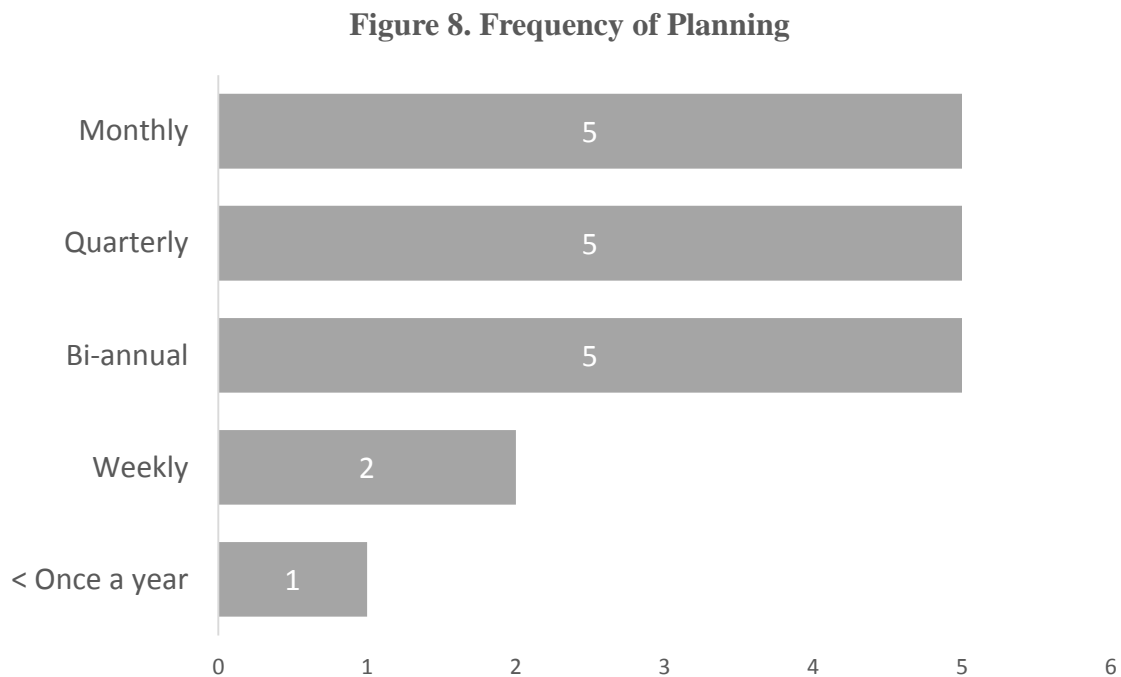
Figure 7. Factors Affecting Media Choice



Formal Planning Frequency and Resources Used

Research Question II looked at the use and frequency of formal planning for marketing strategies. When asked about whether their business participated in the development of formal marketing strategies, 67% of the participants cited that they do not formally plan marketing strategies. The remaining 33% stated that they actively participated in formal planning and provided answers to the frequency that they plan.

The highest frequency of planning was divided evenly between Bi-annual, Quarterly, and Monthly at 5 out of 18 results each. The two remaining categories consisted of Weekly with 2 out of 18 and “Less than Once” per Year 1 out of 18 responses. Figure 8 illustrates the responses for frequency provided by the 18 businesses that engage in formal advertising.

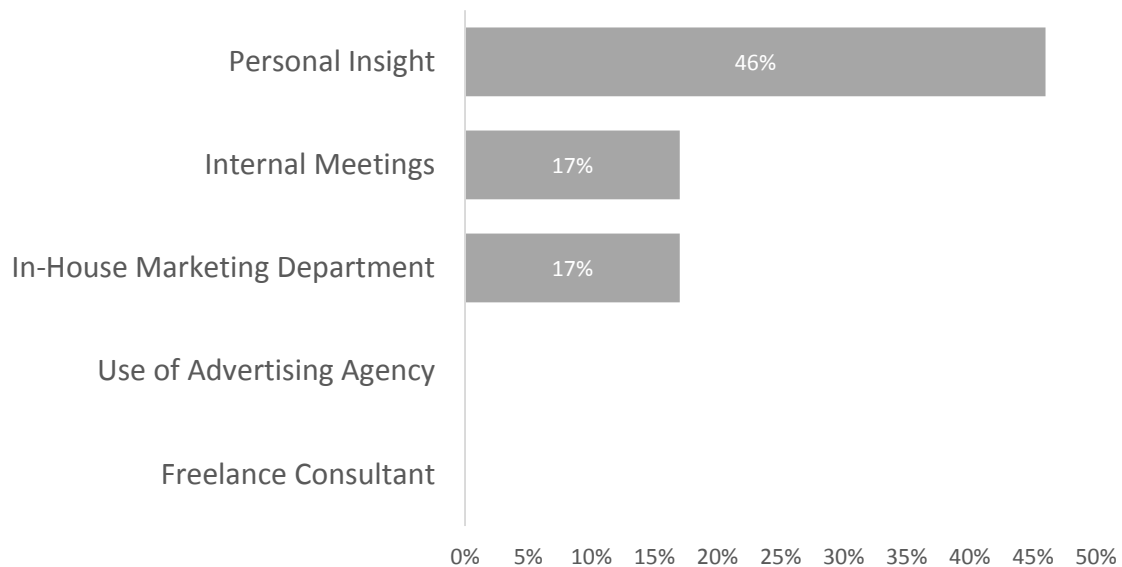


Types of Planning Used. Businesses were asked about the services their businesses used for planning using a Likert scale with frequencies from “Never” to “Constantly” for six forms of services. Results were again recoded into “High” and “Low” frequencies in the same manner as previous results. The full set of results for forms of planning can be found in Appendix IV.

Results for the “High” usage resources yielded a focus on internal development of marketing planning. “Personal Insight” had the highest margin of responses followed by

equal division of “In-House Marketing Development” and “Internal Meetings”. Results also show that no participants stated “High” usage of external resources in the form of “Freelance Consultants” and “Use of Advertising Agency. Results for the combined “High” usage of resources can be viewed in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9. "High" Usage Resource for Marketing Planning



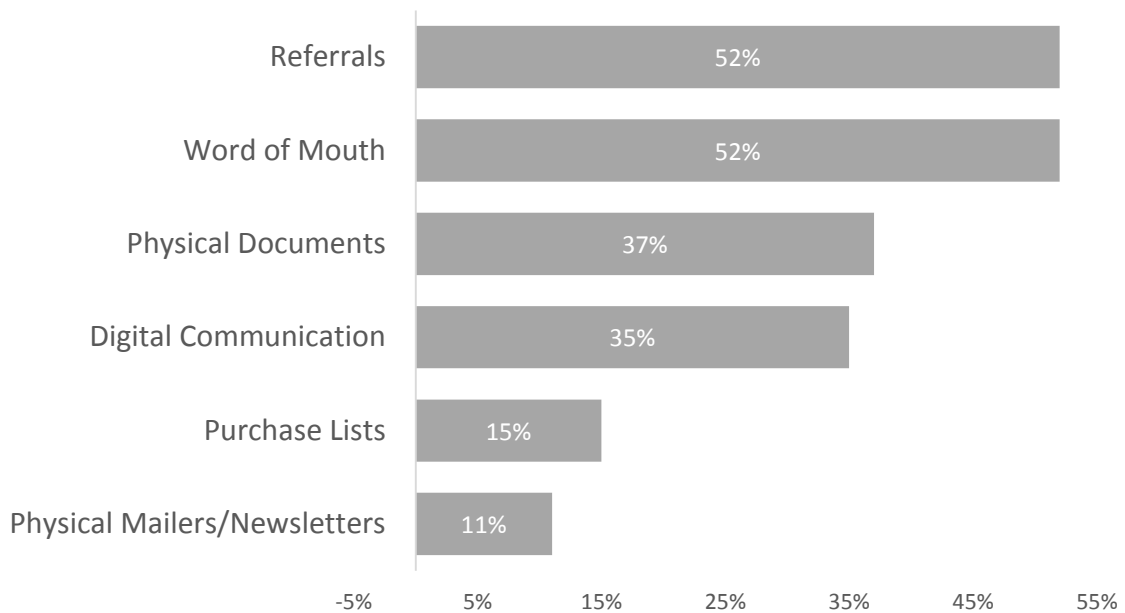
Customer Data Collection and Effect

Research Question III aimed to examine customer data collection and the effected use on communication and media selection factors. Tools for data collection were divided into 7 categories including an “Other” alternative with inclusion of a write in section. The data gathered from this group of responses are compiled below. A compilation of “High” usage tools are provided below and were generated through the same method as previous sections. An extensive list of results for data collection tools can be viewed in Appendix V.

“High” Usage Data Collection Tools.

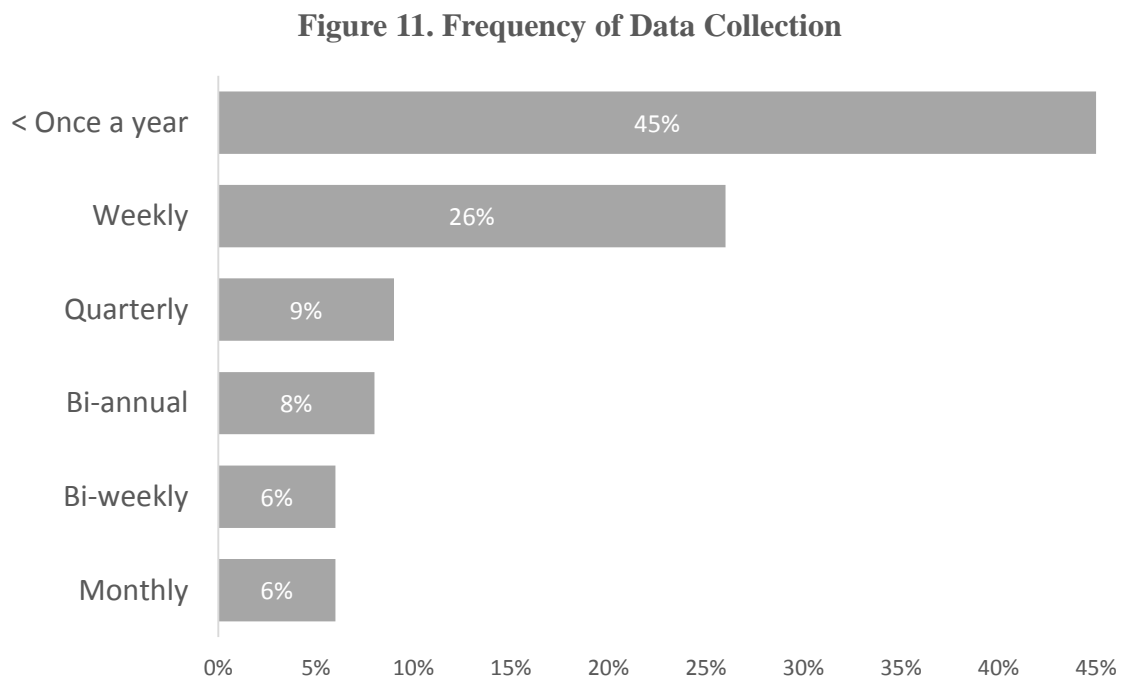
Analysis of the “High” usage data results revealed a propensity for personal communication focused data collection. “Word of Mouth” and “Referrals” received an equal 52% of results each. “Physical Documents” (37%) and “Digital Communication” (35%) formed the medium range for “High Usage” collection. The lowered used tools were “Purchase Lists” and “Physical Mailers/Newsletters” with 15% and 11% respectively. The results for the “High” usage of data collection tools can be viewed in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10. "High" Usage Data Collection Tools



Frequency of Data Collection

Approximately 45% of all the results received from participants were for “Once a Year” with the next largest frequency being 26% for “Weekly” collection. “Quarterly” and “Bi-annual” collection formed the medium frequency range with 9% and 8% respectively. “Monthly” and “Bi-weekly” each received a total of 6% of the results. Figure 11 below illustrates the data received by participants for the frequency of which data is collected.

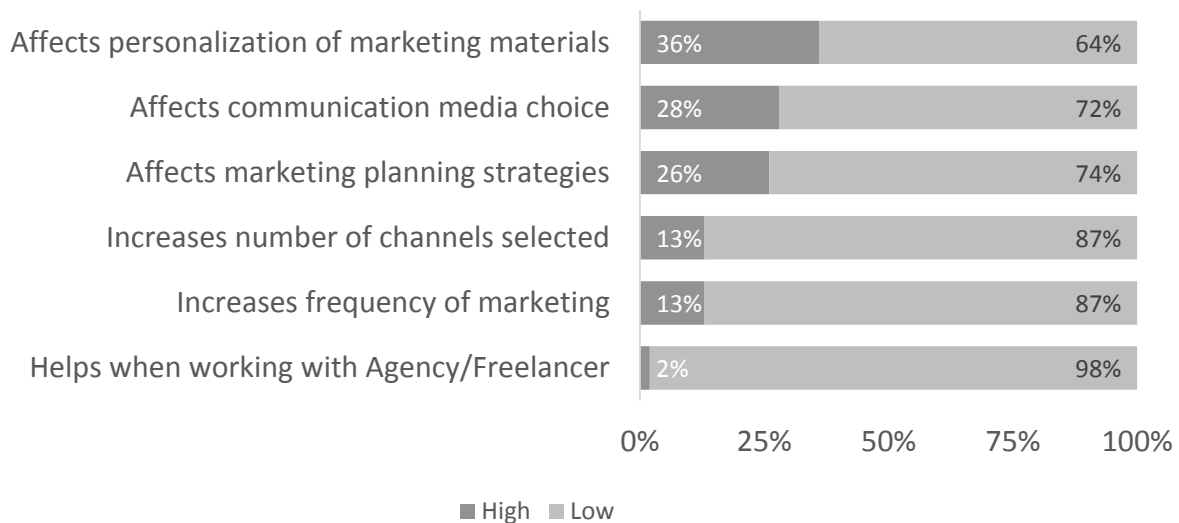


Usage of Customer Data on Marketing Tactics.

Usage of customer data on marketing decisions were gathered through a Likert scale survey question including six options of decision and choices “Never” to “Constantly”. The responses combined the Likert scale options to represent three groups of “Low”, and “High” frequencies based on previous methods in the results section.

“Increases frequency of marketing” (87%), “Increases number of channels selected” (87%), and “Helps with working with Agency/Freelancer” (98%) represented “Low” frequency factors. “Medium”. “Affects personalization of marketing materials” was the largest “High” effect on decision making with 36% of data for its section. “Affects communication media choice” and “Affects marketing planning strategies” were close in responses at 28% and 26% respectively. Results from all six factors can be viewed in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12. Affects of Customer Data



Customer Growth and Marketing Decisions

This research question examined the relationships between dependent variables of “Growth” and “Non-Growth” of businesses’ customer base and the independent variables for marketing and advertising decisions. The variables gathered from the initial survey were recoded to allow for the use of a Chi Square test to establish whether a significant relationship were present for the variables. “Growth” businesses were formed from

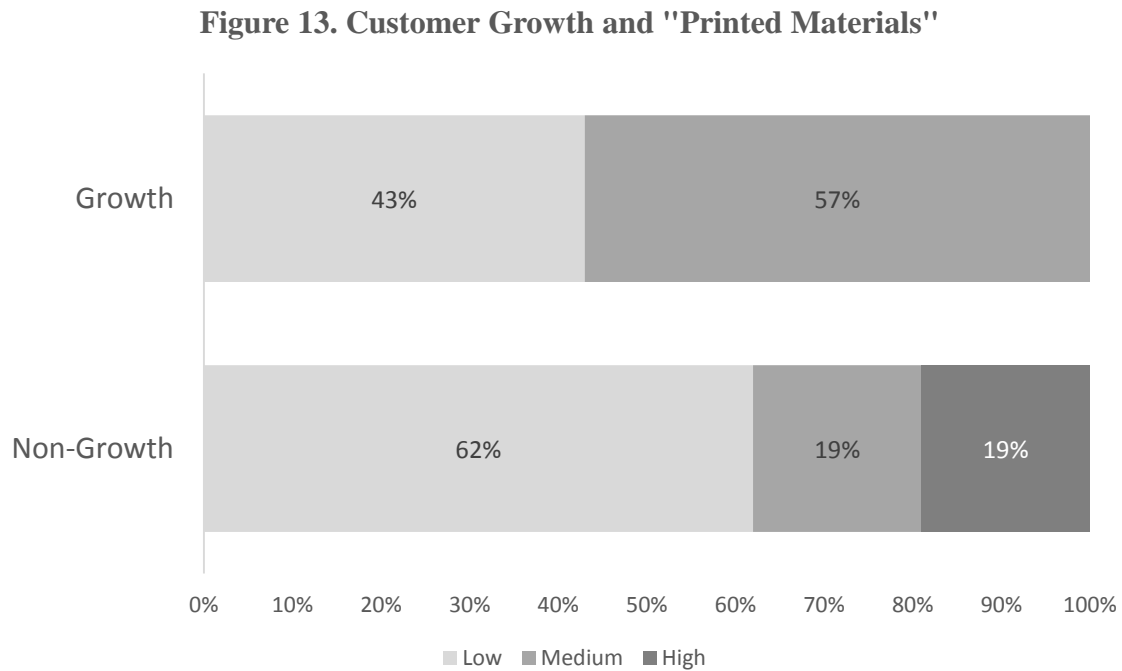
participants who cited their customer base had seen “Major Growth”, “Growth”, and “Slight Growth” while “Non-Growth” consisted of “Stayed Same”, “Slight Decline”, and “Major Decline”. The independent variables were combined by pairing responses for: “Never” and “Rarely”, “Occasionally” and “Often”, and “Frequently” and “Constantly” into “Low”, “Medium” and “High” respectively. A pair of hypotheses were formed to investigate this relationship and are listed below.

H0 - There are no significant relationships between Growth and No Growth businesses and the marketing and advertising variables.

H1 - There are significant relationships between Growth and No Growth businesses and the marketing and advertising variables.

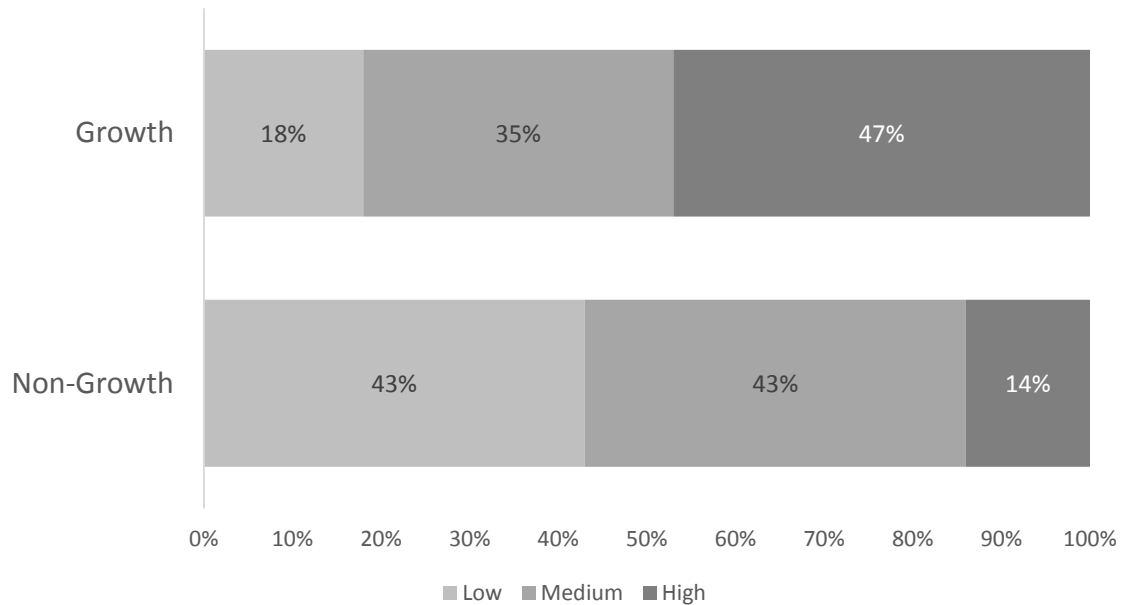
A Chi Squared Test was performed to examine the relation of “Growth” and “Non Growth” of a business and of marketing and advertising decisions. A relationship between “Growth” and “Non Growth” and “Use/Distribution of Printed Materials” was significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 56) = 12.063, p < .05$. The data reveal that 62% of the “Non Growth” group had “Low” usage of Printed Materials while “Medium” and “High” both garnered 19% of the results. The businesses that identified as “Growth” received 57% of the results for the “Medium” usage frequency and 43% for “Low” with no results received for “High” printed use. Figure 13 illustrates the results of the Chi Squared Test and Crosstab. Full output for Crosstab and Chi-Squared Test results can be seen in

viewed in Appendix VI.



A second significant relationship was found between “Growth” and “Non Growth” businesses and the use of “Digital Communication (Social Media/Email)”, $X^2(2, N = 55) = 7.256, p < .05$, in tracking customer data. The data show that the “Non Growth” businesses had 43% of the total “Low” frequency usage when it comes to digital communication 18% of the Growth businesses had the same frequency selected. “Growth” businesses (47%) had the highest frequency of use for “Digital Communication. Figure 14 below illustrates the results of the Crosstab and Chi Squared test for “Customer Growth” and “Digital Communication (Social Media/Email). The full output for Crosstab and Chi Squared Test can be viewed in Appendix VII.

Figure 14. Customer Growth and "Digital Communication"



Years in Operation and Marketing Decisions

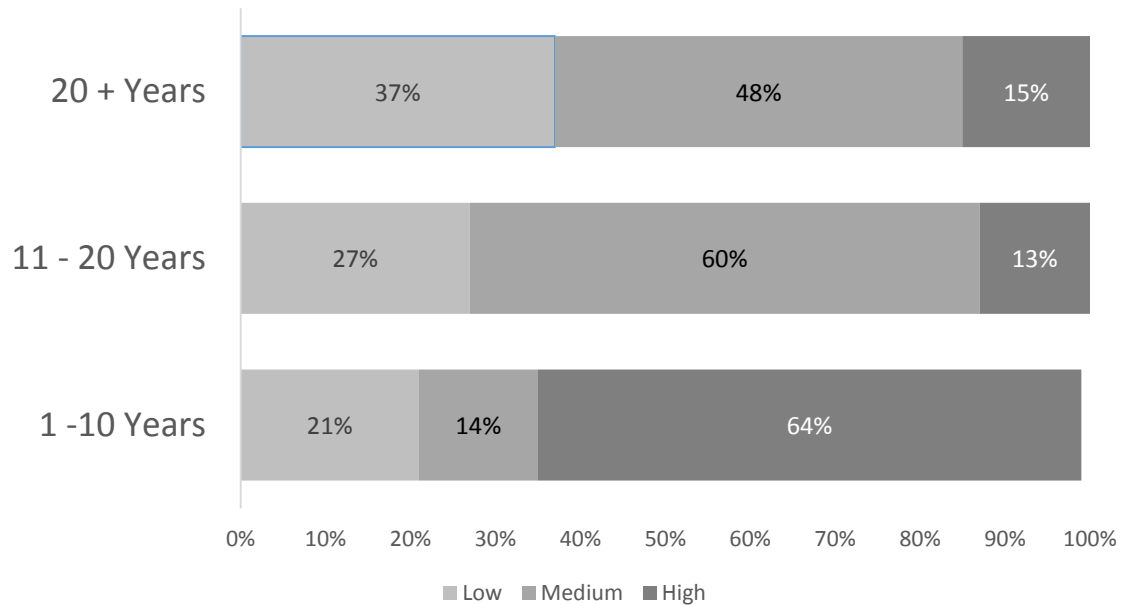
This research question was constructed to examine relationships between the dependent variables of “Years of Operation” of a business and the dependent variables for marketing and advertising decisions. “Years in Operation” were recoded into three groupings of “1 – 10 Years”, “11 – 20 Years”, and “20 + Years” while dependent variables were combined using the methods for Research Question IV. The recoded variables were used to run a Crosstab and Chi Square Test to establish whether a significant relationship was present for the variables. A pair of hypotheses were formed to investigate this relationship and are listed below.

H0 - There are no significant relationships between Years in Operation and the marketing and advertising variables.

H1 - There are significant relationships between Years in Operation and the marketing and advertising variables.

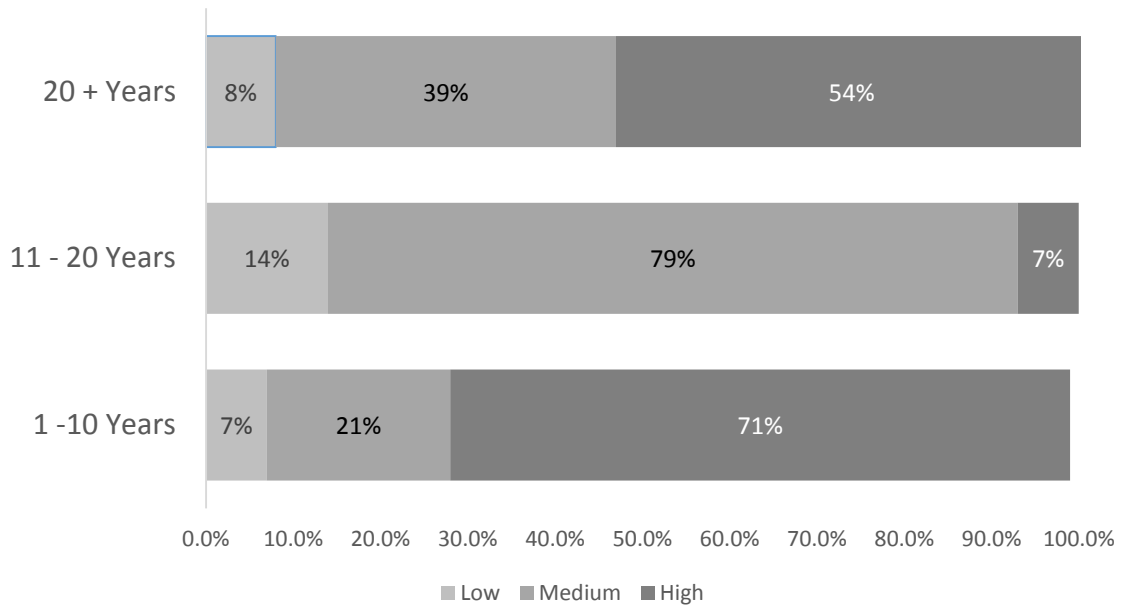
“Years of Operation” in correlation to “Posting to Social Media” resulted in a significant relations, $X^2(4, N = 56) = 14.511, p < .05$. The data reveal that out of the businesses surveyed, those within the “20 + Years” category resulted in the lowest Social Media usage with 37% of the total responses received from the “Low” category. This contrasts the “High” frequency usage of “1 - 10 Years” businesses which received a total of 64% of the total “High” frequency results received. “Medium” usage was revealed to be undergone by businesses of the “11 -20 Years” and “20 + Years” range at 60% and 48% of the “Medium” results respectively. The visual representation for the Crosstab and Chi Squared results for “Years in Operation” and “Posting to Social Media” can be viewed below in Figure 15 below. Full output for the Chi Squared and Crosstab tests can be found in Appendix VIII.

Figure 15. Years in Operation and "Social Media"



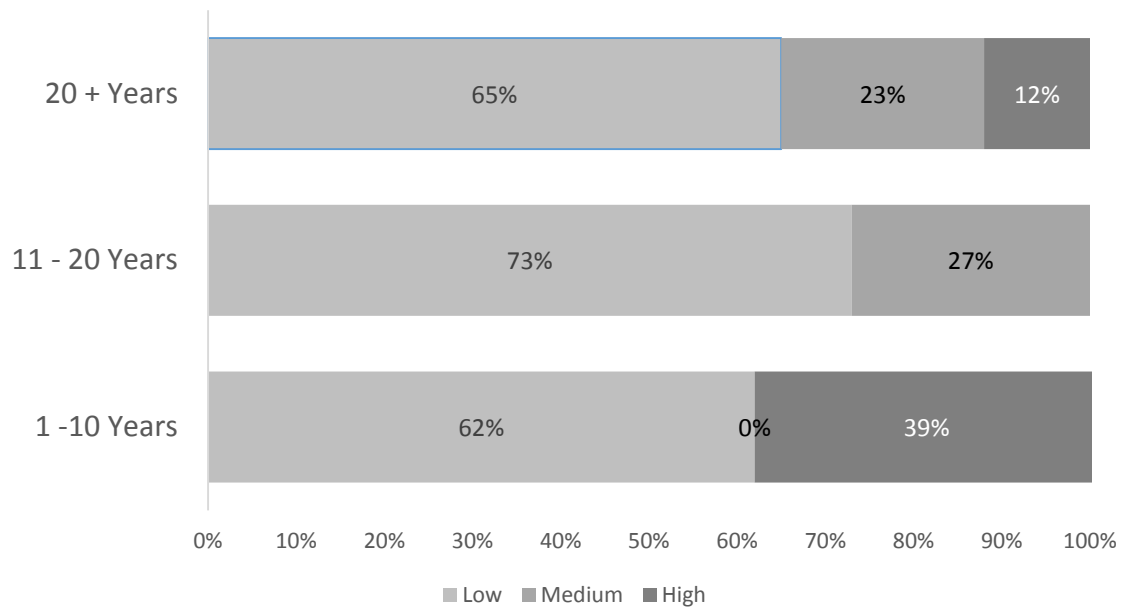
A significant relationship between “Years of Operations” and “Personal Insight” was established by the Chi Squared Test, $X^2(2, N = 54) = 12.931, p < .05$. Results received yielded large percentages of results for “High” and “Medium” Frequencies. Of the data received, a total of 54% of the results for “20 + Years” operations were for “High” usage of “Personal” insight with “Medium” frequency receiving approximately 39%. The “1 - 10 Years” businesses received 71% of their total responses for “High”. “11 - 20 Years” had results focused in the “Medium” range with a total of 79% of their results for the option. Figure 16 illustrates the results for the Crosstab and Chi Squared Test; full output for the Crosstab and Chi Squared test can be found in Appendix IX.

Figure 16. Years in Operation and "Personal Insight"



“Years in Operation” in correlation to “Purchase Lists” resulted in a significant relationship, $X^2(2, N = 54) = 10.712, p < .05$. The results received were largely grouped in the “Low” frequency with the full range of “Years in Operation” having the highest results for that option respectively. Of the “Low” results, the highest percentage were garnered by the “20 + Years” option with a total of 65% of this operational ranges’ total results. “11 - 20 Years” and “1 - 10 Years” received a closer grouping of “Low” percentages with results 73% and 62% of their respective results received for that option. Percentages of results for the Crosstab and Chi Squared Test can be viewed below in Figure 17; a full output for “Years in Operation” and “Purchase Lists” can be viewed in Appendix X.

Figure 17. Years in Operation and "Purchase Lists"



Chapter VII

Conclusions

The area of small business marketing and advertising in a contemporary media setting is still a new and expansive area of study. With the magnitude of media channels available for use between owners and consumers the areas of opportunity for study is ever present. The combination of this fast-paced media environment with the high frequency of business growth and death cycles creates a dynamic environment for academic and financial research alike.

With this concept in mind the goal of this thesis was to examine how small business owners/manager conduct their marketing and advertising practices in relationship to media usage, market planning activities and use of customer data. A survey was constructed to establish the demographic composition of the respondents and to engage the owners or managers in their beliefs for how their business operated within the realm of the three stated areas.

Research Objectives

The initial objectives of this research was do a qualitative analysis of factors that pertain to the decisions made by owners/managers of small businesses in relation to their marketing and advertising tactics. The researcher constructed three research questions that examined this belief and that would illuminate the area of media usage, formal planning and its effect on marketing, and the collection of customer data. The following paragraphs contain the conclude thoughts of the researcher as it pertains to:

1. Media usage results for SMBs in New Hampshire.
2. Factors that effected communication selection.
3. Data collection and its effect on SMB media decisions.
4. Formal planning and its repercussions for communication.
5. Effects of marketing decisions on customer growth
6. Effects of marketing decisions on years in operation
7. Conclusions on marketing models

Advertising Media Used in New Hampshire

The current state of communication media is ever evolving and adapting to technological advances. The marketing activities engaged in New Hampshire, as represented by this research, yielded results that were expected based on the literature. The declining usage of printed materials in favor for less cost intensive media choices were seen when comparing the “High Usage” data in the Results section.

Printed materials have been the communication backbone for businesses throughout history, yet due to competing technology, print based communication has begun to decline. With current allocation of marketing funds at 3% for Magazine and 15% in Newspapers (Ensley, 2011, p. 2) the expected response from participants for this channel was to follow this trend of decreased printed activity. The responses received followed the trends in the industry with print receiving the second lowest results for “High Usage” communication media.

A 2010 study, performed by InfoTrends, established the decline of traditional media was when surveying Graphic Communication Providers about their usage of media for marketing practices (Bondy et al., 2010). Undirected printed communications, ie. Inserts, Directories, and Newspaper Ads, were grouped into middle and low usage media choices and be viewed in Figure 1 of the Literature review.

The literature supports the assumptions the researcher had when researching the media usage of SMBs in New Hampshire. Limited resources are present the primary factor that effects the marketing practices for small businesses. The results for low print usage can be attributed to the established research that the overhead needed to generate and contact customers through printed means puts financial strain on the limited resources of small businesses.

The results for “Distribute Email/Digital Updates” received a mixture of responses across the “Low” to “High” frequency of use. The researcher had not anticipated a mixture of usage due to e-Mail communication’s limited financial investment for small businesses. The literature suggested that there would be a stronger deployment of e-Mail communication based on the interests of SMBs owners/managers’ interest into further expanding into cross media communication activities (Fenton, 2011).

Results obtained for factors that effected media consumption received a “High” affect in relationship to “Cost/Price Justification” and it was expected that e-Mail communication would have yielded higher use. The lower frequency could be represented by “Media’s Impact on Client” receiving the second largest “High” affect for media

selection. The researcher finds that the owners and managers of these small businesses sense the use of e-Mail communication, while inexpensive, does not have a high impact in reaching to their clientele.

The low usage can be attributed to emailing tools such as Mail Chimp or similar services. The fact that these resources cost money to engage in full services and require time to learn about the features may pose a barrier of use for the managers. The frequency for digital communication suggest that businesses use this resource sparingly and avoid sending unnecessary emails to clients.

Results for “Post to Social Media” showed another scattered usage by small businesses as viewed in Figure 6.3 in Appendix II. Results showed that there was an emphasis on intermittent Social Media use. The literature showed this frequency of use by marketers and support that the usage of SMBs follows the trends of larger organizations. The researcher found that the usage of this media, while not a financial burden in a traditional sense, does require time on behalf of the owner or manager to be engaged online and compliments the notion that “Cost/Price Justification” plays an integral role in communication efforts.

The growth of the Internet and multitude of platforms allow small businesses to easily adopt this form of communication but the results suggest a slight aversion to this communication channel. With the growth of the Social Media platform the need for new skills are also present for the effective use of the medium. The need for these new skills

represent hidden costs that owners and managers would rather invest in other aspects of their operation.

The lack of financial investment is considered when time management and personnel are taken into account. As was stated in the research, small businesses can adopt the marketing practices of larger organizations (O'Donnell, 2011, p. 782), which for Social Media usage requires employees dedicated to the generation of new content on behalf of the organization. This concept poses a potential problem for small businesses with their limited resources allotted and the generation of content falls on the part of either the owner, manager, or other employees which takes time out normal daily operations. The “Medium” usage suggest posting to Social Media is used when time can be allotted to the task or to relay important information to clients.

The researcher suggest that the use of Social Media can be better integrated into the communication workflow of small businesses through emphasis on “Personal Insight” on the owner or manager. The owners or managers can best integrate the use of Social Media by integrating their own personality into the company’s Social Media activities. Spence & Essoussi’s (2008) research into small business brand management support this claim and state that SMBs brand management is a representation of the beliefs and values of the owner and should be integrated into any communication method engaged.

The first impression of a company in today’s technological focus environment is formed by a customer's visit to a business’s website. This requires vigilant maintenance of content available to clients on the website which can be done by the owner, manager, or

outside resources by the business. Results for this section of the survey surprised the researcher initially due to grouping of responses primarily in the “Medium” and “High” frequency fields. This suggests a heavy focus of small businesses owners on their web presence.

The use of online website builders are an explanation for the higher frequency of use in comparison to other forms of communication as it allows the owner or manager to personally adjust the information. Combined with the focus on owners or managers to use “Personal Insight” on the effect of media choice it can be ascertained that the higher frequency for updates is due to the ability of the owners or managers to do the task on their own and at their own pace.

The growth of the mobile devices keeps individuals in ever present contact with the world around them yet represent only 1% of the advertising market (Ensley, 2011). Bondy et al. (2010) found that Mobile updates were of lower use by marketers while dealing with their clientele. The data received is supported by the research of the subject matter. With approximately 64% of owners citing as never using this medium and 24% rarely deploying this media.

The assumed risk involved for the use of mobile distribution can be contributed to the need to allocate the limited resources to pay for the cost to generate and distribute the content with the relatively low return on investment for mobile responses. However, the low usage of mobile and high activity rate from consumers (Ensley, 2011) suggest that the integration of focused mobile marketing present an untapped revenue source. To integrate

into small businesses it would require an emphasis “Do-It-Yourself” for owners and managers’ adoption, as results illustrated a lack of interaction between businesses and advertising agencies.

Relationship Marketing was established as the core focus of marketing efforts participated by small businesses and focuses on the creation of strong physical relationships between owners or managers and their clientele. (Hultman and Shaw, 2003, p. 38) The results received for the use of “Word of Mouth” marketing were received heavily for medium and high frequency and supports established literature. The higher level of usage of this form of communication can be attributed to the low cost required for the business owners and the established understanding that small businesses are heavily influenced by the ability of the owner or manager to self-promote their business.

The combination of the “High” frequency results in relationship to the “Media Usage” category yielded results that were anticipated based on the literature. Of the media options provided on the test the most used media were “Participate in Word of Mouth”, “Update Company Website”, and “Post to Social Media”. It can be ascertained that these results are higher than the others on the list due to not requiring large financial investments, with the exception of “Updating Company Website”. The exception for “Updating Company Website” can be attributed to the various methods for which a company can keep that information up to date including “Do-It-Yourself” website builders being a low cost option while hiring Content Managers to do the updates can build costs over time.

The lower frequency of “Distribute Email/Digital Updates”, “Create/Distribute Printed Advertisements”, and “Distribute Mobile Updates” were expected based on literature reviewed by the researcher. These three forms of communication all carry with them a higher price point for distribution of materials. While e-Mail initially seemed to not fit the description of low investment communication media, the costs present can come in the form of acquiring email addresses via purchase lists and the use or need of services to reach out to a large client base at a single time.

“Printed Material” created an interesting relationship to the researcher in relation to technological adoption. Since print advertising is declining in usage, it can be assumed to have a higher ranking in usage compared to the newer methods for smaller businesses that are less likely to adopt newer communication media. “Mobile Updates” can still be considered a younger technology, especially in relationship to the recent growth in native cellphone applications, and thus was expected to receive the lower percentage of responses. The close relationship between the frequencies of “Printed Advertisements” and “Mobile Updates” illustrates an view that suggests that technology adoption does not have as much of a relationship for usage as preliminarily assessed. This can be viewed by the fact that these two forms of communication had long adoption times in-between each forms inception yet both received low usage.

Factors for Communication Media Decisions

The results received for the factors that influenced the communication channel yielded results that were consistently low in effect on choice. Of all the responses the one

response option of “Cost/Price Justification” received the largest percentage of results for “High” affect. The data agrees with the literature in that small businesses are more financially aware when it comes to the need to communicate with their clients and thus consider financial risks before engaging in selecting a communication media.

Two of the most surprising results were found within the “Media’s Effect on Client” and “Ad Agency Services” options. When looking at the data it shows that, while close in percentage, the overall weight of “Media’s Effect on Client” fall on the “Low” scale. This suggested that small businesses are less inclined to reach out to clients via a media choice preferred by the consumer. This lack of listening to consumers and the reliance on “Personal Insight” affects the deployment of effective marketing tactics in that it disregards the clients’ wants and creates a barrier between business and consumer. This in turn makes consumers less probable to respond to communications they do not wish to receive.

Secondarily the almost unanimous rejection of “Ad Agency Services” suggest that there is a potential area for growth between advertising agencies and small businesses. The combination of results show that “Cost/Price Justification” substantially outweighs the use of agencies for small businesses. This makes sense in the simple fact that using advertising agencies cost funds that small businesses are not able to freely expend funds when communicating with clients.

Formal Marketing Planning and Frequency

The data received for this portion of the survey supported the established literature in the field. Tariq and Wahid (2011) found there to be a fundamentally low usage of formal marketing planning conducted by small businesses and if there was a generation of a plan it was only followed loosely. Approximately 67% of the participants stated that they did not actively engage in formal marketing planning. The businesses that did formally develop plans were divided among the frequency of generation with the highest responses between “Bi-Annual” and “Monthly” plans.

The low frequency for which these businesses formally plan is of concern for the fact that active generation of the plan allows for generation of new and innovative concepts to reach out to customers. The small number for the sample makes it is hard to establish a strong representation of the behavior for planning in the small business environment but the data show an overwhelming lack of planning.

Without the incorporation of a formal marketing plan the generation of marketing and advertising materials falls fully on a more spontaneous generation based on the current state of the business. This is supported by data received for the use of personal insight by the owners/managers of the business. It has been established that the perception of small business brands is heavily a personal representation of the owner or managers’ beliefs and values (Spence and Essoussi, 2008, p. 1048). The high frequency of use for Personal Insight supports this concept as it is the managers and owners who have the final say when deploying media content.

Formal Data Collection and Methods of Collection

The need for updated and well maintained customer data forms the backbone of marketing and advertising to clients. Without adequate information about the customers the generation of proper advertising tactics is unfocused and strategically inefficient. The literature suggests that collection of useable data and the generation of strategic use for the information is difficult for all sizes of businesses (Bondy et al., 2010). This previous research is supported by small businesses low frequency of data gathering and varied methods of collection.

The survey revealed responses that did not surprise the researcher. The polarization of the statistics show that the frequency of data collection is heavily weighted on each end of the spectrum with 45% for “< Once a Year” and 26% for “Weekly” with equal percentage divided between the remaining categories. The low frequency at which data is collected was supported by the literature stating that data collection from external sources is the second largest issue larger organizations face (Bondy et al., 2010). Data tracking results being polarized were expected and help illustrate how small businesses can face the same problems as their larger counterparts when dealing with marketing efforts.

Investigation into the methods of collection shed light on to how the businesses acquire the information required to communicate with clients. Analysis of results reaffirmed the use of “Relationship Marketing” by small businesses in their pursuit to further build their client information database. “Word of Mouth” and “Referrals” being

the largest grouping of “High” responses demonstrates this and follows the literature that small businesses look to focus on facilitating stronger relationships with clients over the use of other tools.

Furthermore, the medium range of “Digital Communication” and “Physical Documentation” also help affirm the literature in that both methods are low cost methods to keep information on clients. This is exemplified by the fact that the two lowest scoring percentages were for “Purchase Lists” and “Physical Mailers/Newsletters”. The price of media selection and data collection form the basic structure for small businesses as it relates to the way that they communicate with their clients.

For small businesses to bridge the information gap of data collection is a resource that assists in their ability to track information on clients. The use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software is a suggested solution for the aggregation of the information received by owners and managers. This software would allow the control of data to be done by the owner and manager and can include the ability to compile from the various methods of data gathering into a collective of useable information.

Effect of Data on Marketing Decisions.

The results of the analysis show that there is limited effect on the use of client data as it pertains to the distribution of communication materials. It is promising to see that the areas with “Medium” affect fall within the ranges of planning, communication media and personalization. By tailoring their strategies small businesses are able to effectively

balance the costs to communicate with the return on investment for each contact without stretching their marketing budget too far.

However, the “Low” effects on frequency, quantity of media selected, and use with external planning sources does pose issues in the realm of Graphic Communication Providers. There is a divide between small business owners/managers and the advertising agencies/freelancers which presents an opportunity for development of new methods create content and further explore the realm of small business marketing and advertising. The data suggests however that there should be a focus on allowing the owners/managers an opportunity to be included more thoroughly to ensure that their “Personal Insight” included in the company’s marketing ventures.

Growth/Non Growth and Marketing Decisions

The results received for the relationship between Growth and Non Growth businesses formed two significant relationships. The first was for usage of print showed a heavier hold in the areas of “Low” and “Medium” frequency with only “Non Growth” businesses having received results for “High” The data suggest that printed materials are beginning to slowly lose the percent of marketing budget from the small businesses which follows the trends established for larger corporations.

The data presented does not surprise as the use of printed materials requires the small business to use their limited marketing funds to produce the communication materials. The usage of “Medium” frequency printed materials could be seen as a result of businesses needing to print necessary items such as business cards or informational

booklets that are available in shop to customers. These items have a longer shelf life and would require less frequent generation as the amount needed could be done in batches throughout the company's life cycle.

The other significant relationship between "Growth"/"Non Growth" businesses and the "Use of Digital Communication" for data collection follows the established concept that small businesses aim to limit financial expenditure and use tools that require less cost associations. However, it is noted that small businesses that use "Digital Communication" may consider the costs in their budget to include the use of computer based solution to data collection such as Customer Relationship Management systems or purchase lists to assist in their information gathering habits.

Years in Operation and Marketing Decisions

Of the variables tested during the Chi Squared Test for "Years in Operation" and the various marketing decisions only three came up with significant variables. The first of these relations was for "Posting to Social Media" and resulted in illustrating a focus for younger small businesses to use this method more frequently. As the technology grows more businesses will begin to adopt Social Media in a manner that younger owners and managers are already engaging with these platforms.

The researcher found it interesting that "Medium" frequency resulted in a higher percentage for "20 + Years" in comparison to its "High" response in relation to "Posting to Social Media". This does suggest that established businesses are engaging in the platform and using it to reach clients. The moderate usage does propose that this

communication form does not come as easily to the owners or managers and they are still acclimating to the media as they integrate it into their marketing plans.

The “Medium” frequency resulted in a higher percentage for “11 - 20 Years” in comparison to its “High” and the significant relationship that developed in “Personal Insight” was initially surprising. But when compared throughout the results collected only helped to strengthen the literature and data presented in preliminary research. Owners or managers of small businesses being more active and engaged in their marketing is a result of their businesses being an extension of themselves.

The significant relationship received between “Years in Operation” and “Purchase Lists” for client data collection further enforces the concept that small businesses limit their engagement in marketing practices with higher financial costs. Purchasing a data list provides numerous potential clients but the return of investment is directly related to the communication media selected. When related to purchase list each option added to the initial name and address, as example email addresses, presents further costs to the baseline list and are deterrents for small businesses to engage.

Small Business Marketing Model

The results received from the research help to illustrate the need for a concise marketing model for small businesses. The researcher suggest that the data reveal the need for this model to be focused on using the “Personal Insight” of the owners and managers to promote adoption of cross media communication. The lack of interaction

from owners and managers and advertising agencies/freelancers further supports the need for the marketing model to be designed as a “Do-It-Yourself” software.

The model should be developed as a combination of workflow management and CRM software to encourage the aggregation of customer data from multiple sources. The lack of formal planning on behalf of small businesses could increase from the ability of the owners and managers to have control of the communication endeavors from concept to deployment. The last aspect needed would be the inclusion of self-deployment of communication media by the owners and managers with final module that can aggregate the final communication plan in tiers of price.

For Graphic Communication Providers looking to expand into working with small businesses this model could be included as a web based application. The proprietary software would allow the owners and managers to self-generate communication efforts and submit the job virtually while the Graphic Communication Provider would obtain payment for usage or printing fees. By aggregating the various areas of communication media, marketing planning, and data collection into a single resource a new method for small businesses Cross Media communication can be introduced to the ever expanding small business market.

Limitations

Time Allotment

The duration of the time allotted to gather data in the field affected the overall response rate and final Sample for the survey. Studies into the field of small business

owner and managers in relationship to marketing and advertising done by larger organizations have yielded more substantiated results. Limited time constraints of thesis completion windows present an issue of a single researcher gathering adequate data to form stronger significant relationships.

Businesses Surveyed

Assumptions were made initially that the data file that was used to contact businesses consisted of potentially two scenarios; the first being that of a business that was still in operation and the other being a business that had ceased to exist. During time in the field a potential respondent contacted the researcher to clarify that this may not always be the case with some businesses having become acquired by a larger organizations, as was the case with their business. Inclusion of this potential outcome would open up the opportunity for past small business owners and managers to share their input as it pertains to the marketing practices they had undergone.

Survey Construction

Upon review of the results the researcher found that the structure of the survey could have been designed to include other aspects of marketing and advertising practices. This review also present the potential revisions to a final survey to eliminate qualitative fields for quantifiable data that combined with longer in field time would have allowed for stronger statistical tests to be run for analysis.

Further Research

The field of small businesses marketing tactics present many opportunities for research into the future. The researcher suggests to further research on the relationship of “Customer Growth” and “Years in Operation” as it pertains to the marketing and advertising practices. The ability to quantify the growth of a business with these operations would allow the ability to further construct the models for small businesses advertising.

Other areas presented for future research come in the form of external relationships of small businesses when it pertains to planning and executing marketing and advertising communication. The low results for “Advertising Agency” and “Freelance Consultant” use, while qualitative, present an opportunity to establish effects these relationships and how to further provide the tools for Graphic Communication Providers to increase the efficiency between the two.

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Appendix I

Subject Consent Form

The purpose of this form is to let you know why we would like your participation in this experiment and to let you know about **your rights**.

Who I Am: My name is Rockie Hunter and I am a graduate student completing a Master of Science in Print Media at the School of Media Sciences. My research interests are in the marketing and advertising practices undergone by small businesses and the factors that affect their methods of creation and distribution. Required for completion of my M.S. degree is a thesis project. My advisors for this thesis project are Professor Chris Bondy and Professor Pat Sorce.

Purpose of the Research: The goal of this research is to elicit honest feedback from subjects from the small business sector of New Hampshire on their marketing and advertising practices and knowledge. The data collected will assess the particular methods for which these businesses generate marketing and advertising materials.

Reasons to Participate: Your participation in this survey will assist in learning the preferences that small businesses have for specific communication methods and distribution. This knowledge could then be used to create a more intuitive and focused marketing and advertising methodology for small business owners/managers.

Risks: Honest feedback allows for the use of honest criticism and with this in mind I want to assure you that several steps will be taken to ensure your responses are confidential. No responses you give will be able to be traced back specifically to you during the study. You are also under no obligation to participate and have the right to stop the experiment at any time you feel.

Procedure: The experiment will consist of an online survey that includes demographic information as well as marketing and advertising practices. The experiment will take no longer than a half hour to complete.

Voluntary Action: Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Nothing will happen to you if you decide not to participate.

Confidentiality: There is no way to specifically identify your answers upon completion of the survey. All data acquired is not linked to a specific participant and ensures complete anonymity. I will analyze all of the responses for the sole purpose of completing this report.

Results: The report will be used in the School of Media Sciences at RIT. Results of the report can be requested by contacting Rockie Hunter.

In Case of Questions: If you have questions at all about this study, please contact Professor Chris Bondy at any time: School of Media Sciences, Rochester Institute of Technology, 69 Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY 14623-5604. Email: christopher.bondy@rit.edu Telephone: 585-475-2755. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in the research, please contact the Human Subjects Research Office at RIT, 475-7673.

Participation: By continuing to the next page and completing the survey you agree to participate in this experiment for Rockie Hunter's Thesis Project: "Cross Media Communication Planning for Small Businesses".

1. In what industry does your business operate?

- ☐ Retail ☐ Automotive (Sales/Repair) ☐ Financial Services ☐ Labor (Construction/Landscaping) ☐ Hospitality (Hotel or Vacation Services) ☐ Other

If Other, please specify what you consider your area of operation.

***2. How Long has your business been in operation?**

- ☐ <1 year ☐ 1 - 5 years ☐ 6 - 10 years ☐ 11 - 15 years ☐ 16 - 20 years ☐ 20+ years

3. During the last 2 years, how have these areas of your business developed?

	Major Decline	Slight Decline	Stayed Same	Slight Growth	Growth	Major Growth
Customer Base	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employee Size (Total # of employees)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Geographic Reach (Total # of miles)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Products/Services Offered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Number of Operations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Building Size	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Select the frequency that relates best to your generation of the listed marketing materials.

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Frequently	Constantly
Create/Distribute Printed Advertisements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distribute Email/Digital Updates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Post to Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Update Company Website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distribute Mobile Updates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participate in Word of Mouth Interactions (trade-shows, business groups, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If Other, please specify type of channel used.

5. Select the level for which each factor affects your choice in communication channel.

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Frequently	Constantly
Media's impact on client	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cost/Price Justification	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad Agency Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Competitor Behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of Customer Data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restraints/Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If Other, please specify factor.

6. Does your business develop formal marketing strategies?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. If yes to Q6 - How often do you formally plan marketing communication?

☐ < Once a year

☐ Bi-annual

☐ Quarterly

☐ Monthly

☐ Bi-weekly

☐ Weekly

8. What resources does your business use to create new marketing plans to communicate with customers?

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Frequently	Constantly
Use of Advertising Agency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internal Meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Freelance Consultant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In-House Marketing Department	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal Insight	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If Other, please specify method of generation.

9. How do you keep track of information about your customers - new and returning?

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Frequently	Constantly
Physical Documents (Sign In Book/Receipts)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical Mailers/Newsletters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Digital Communication (Soc. Media/Email)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Word of Mouth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Referrals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purchase Lists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If Other, please specify method.

10. How often does your business gather customer information?

☐ < Once a year ☐ Bi-annual ☐ Quarterly ☐ Monthly ☐ Bi-weekly ☐ Weekly

11. Select the corresponding answer as it relates to your use of client data.

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Frequently	Constantly
Affects communication media choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increases frequency of marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affects personalization of marketing materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affects marketing planning strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increases number of channels selected	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helps when working with Agency/Freelancer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

This page has been provided as a means to protect the anonymity of those who wish to receive the survey results. Those interested in results can visit the link provided at the bottom this page.

Thank you again for your valuable time and input.

Cheers,

Rockie Allen Hunter
Masters of Science Candidate
School of Media Science
Rochester Institute of Technology

[Result Request Form](#)

Appendix II

Figure 5.1 Employee Size Growth

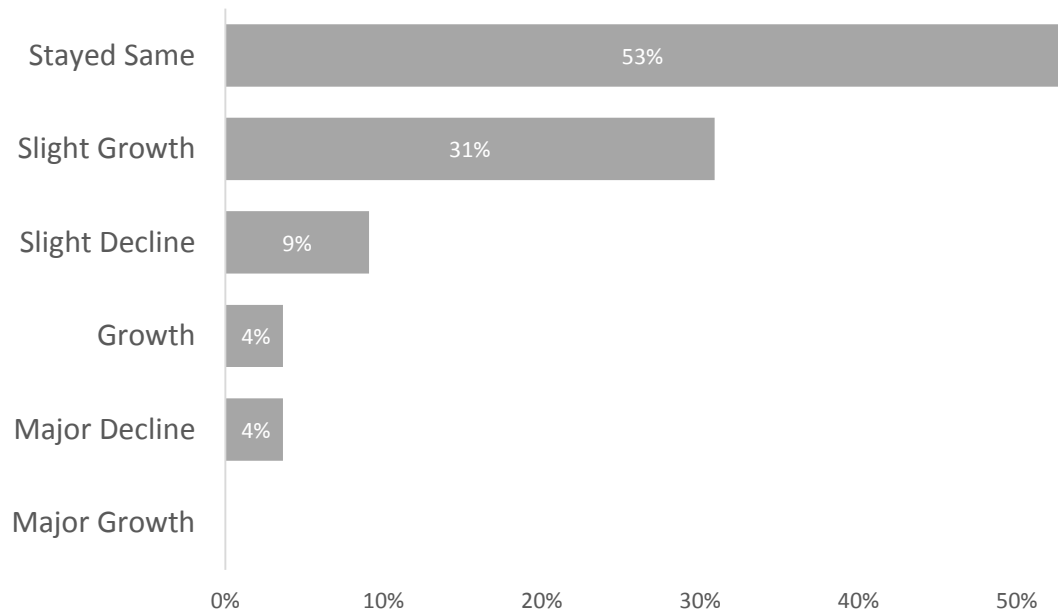


Figure 5.2 Geographic Reach Development

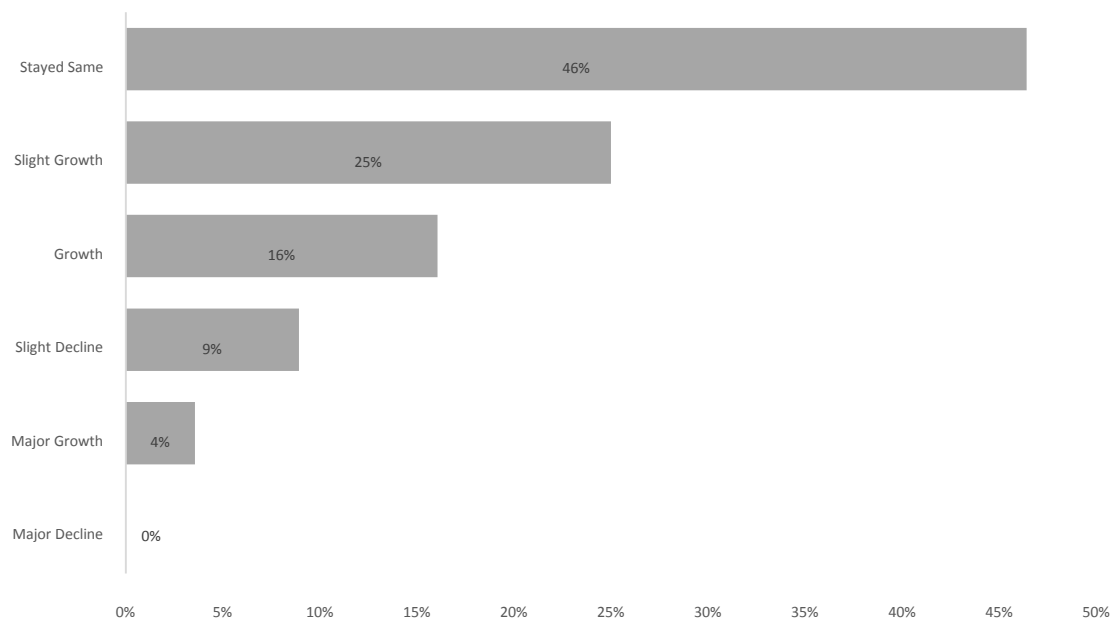


Figure 5.3 Development of Products/Services Offered

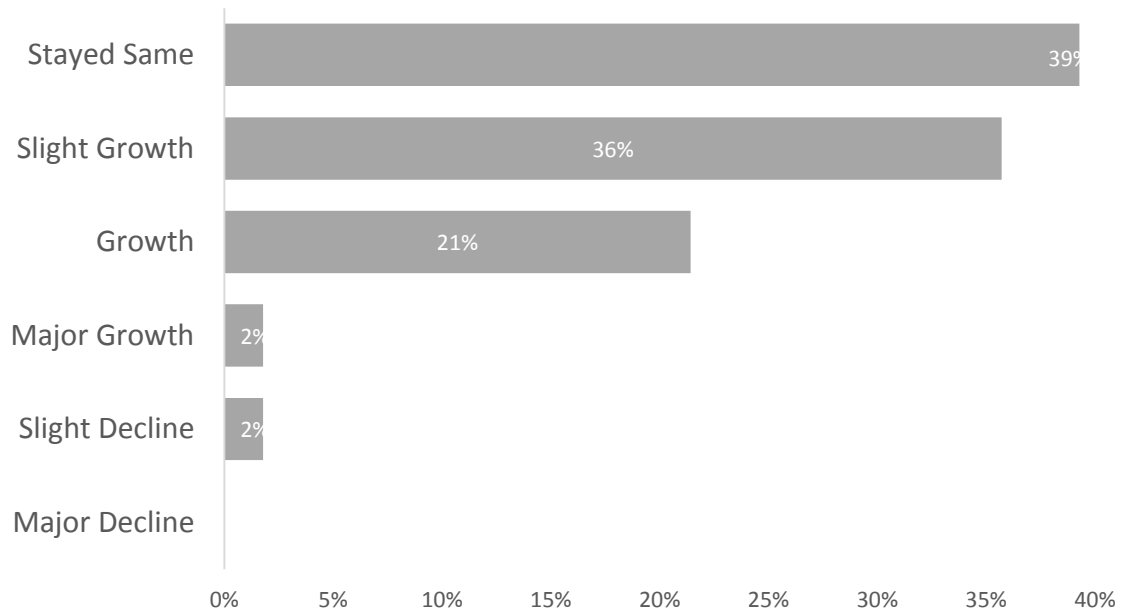


Figure 5.4 Number of Operations Growth

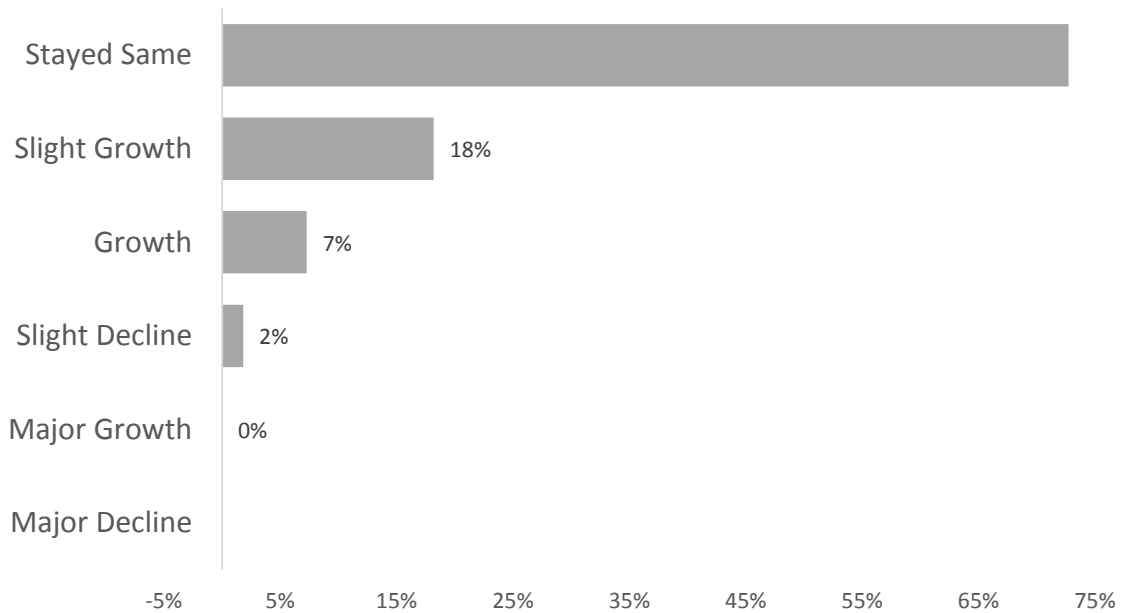
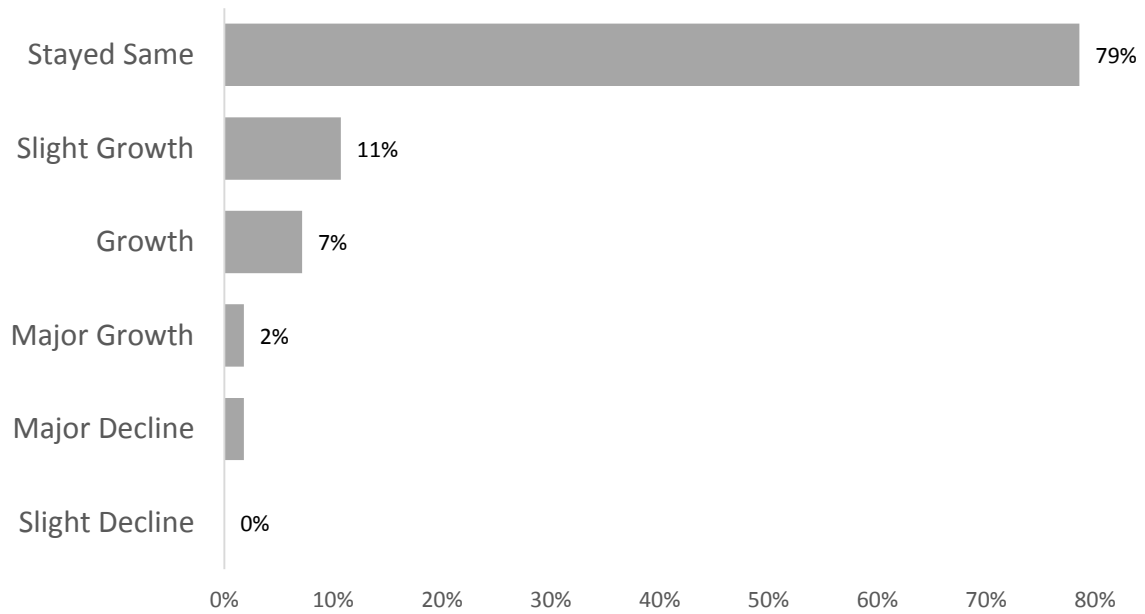


Figure 5.5 Building Size Development



Appendix III

Figure 6.1 Printed Material Usage

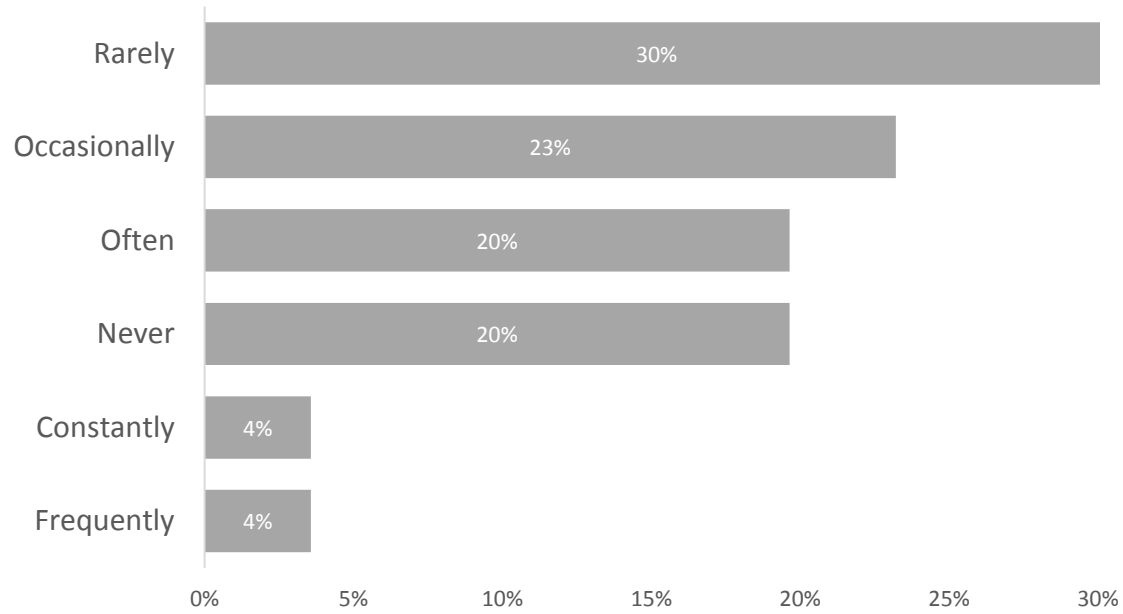


Figure 6.2 Email and Digital Usage

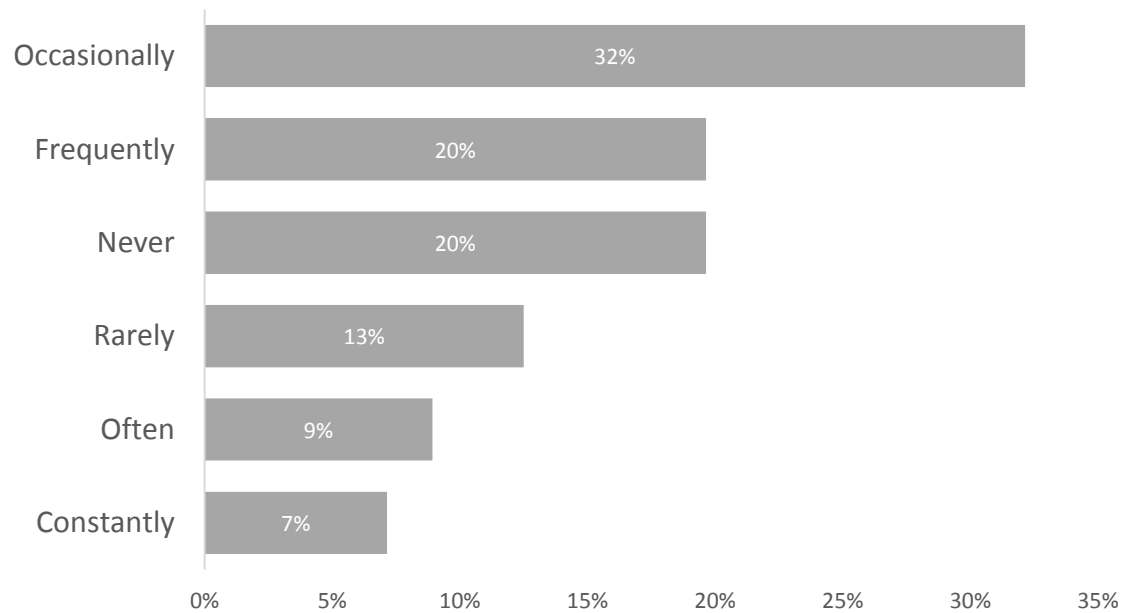


Figure 6.3 Use of Social Media Sites

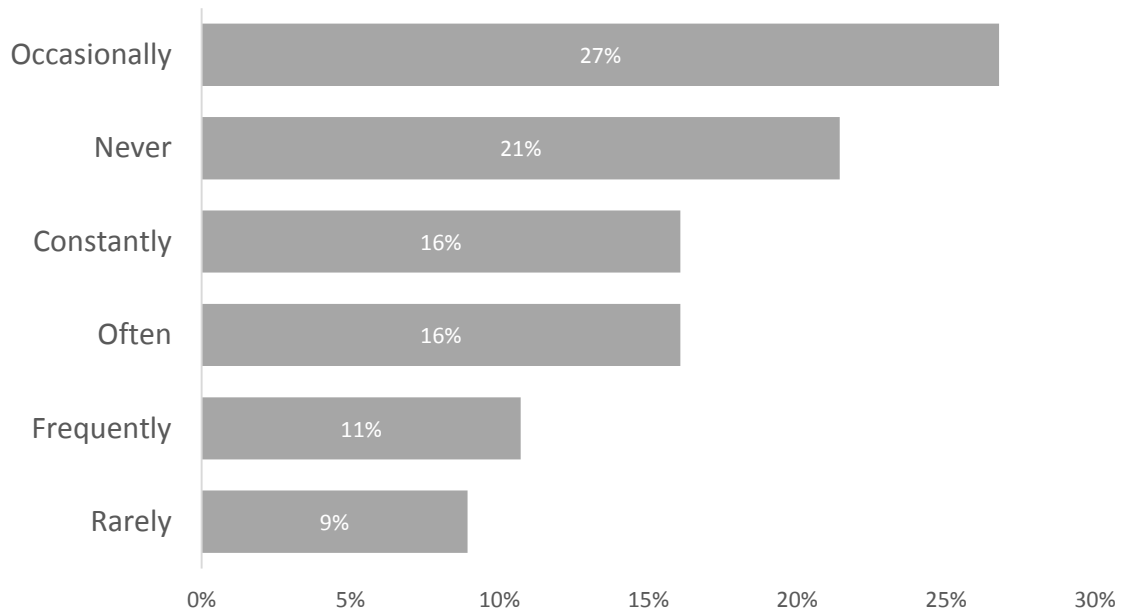


Figure 6.4 Business Website Updates

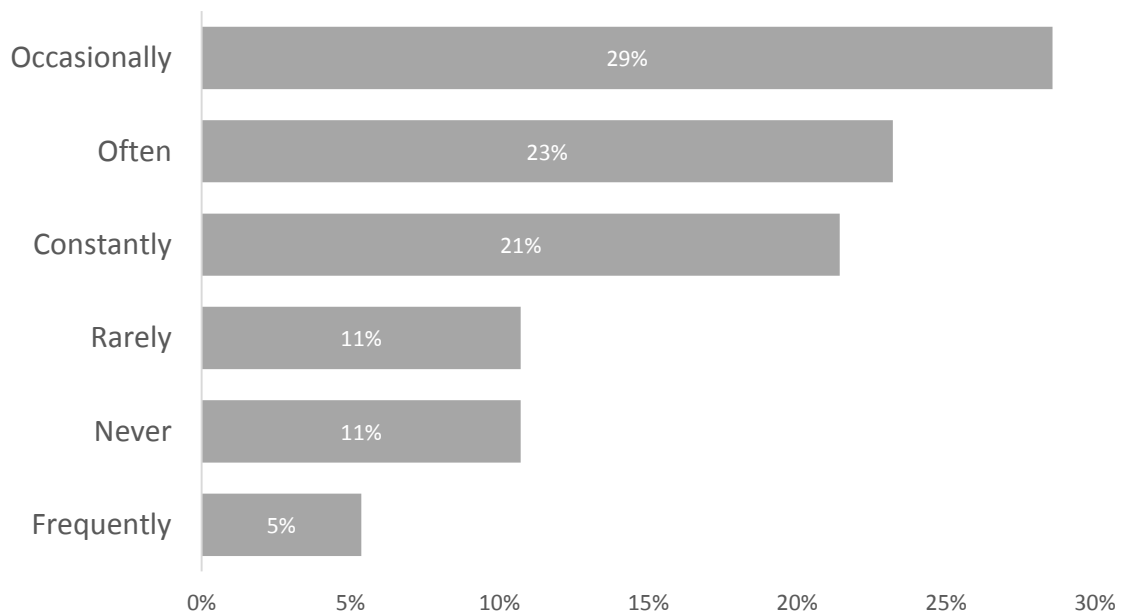


Figure 6.5 Mobile Media Usage

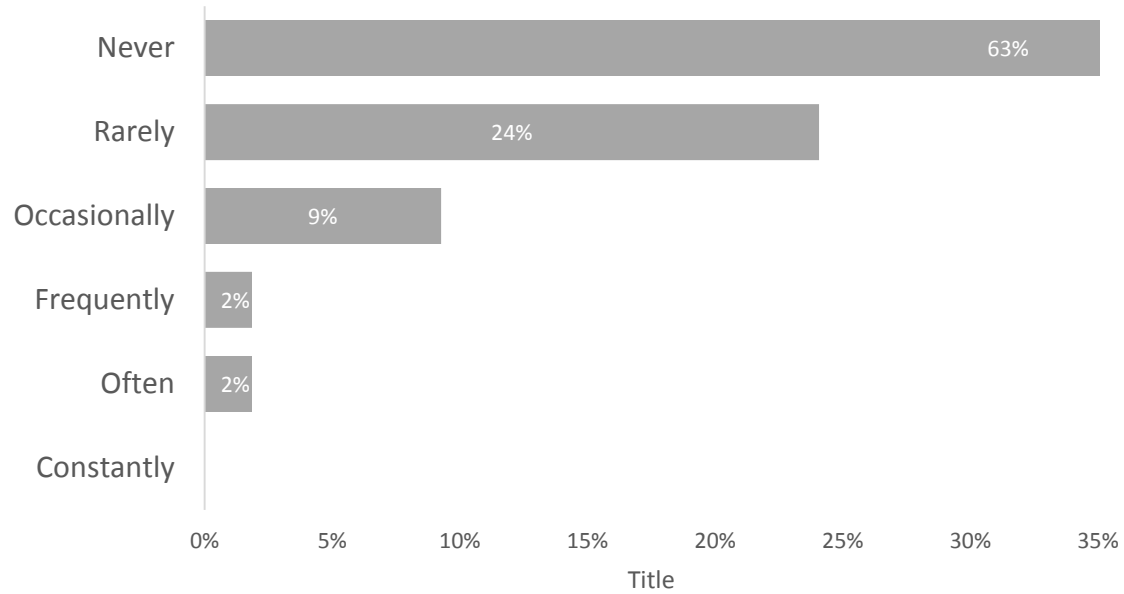


Figure 6.6 Word of Mouth Usage

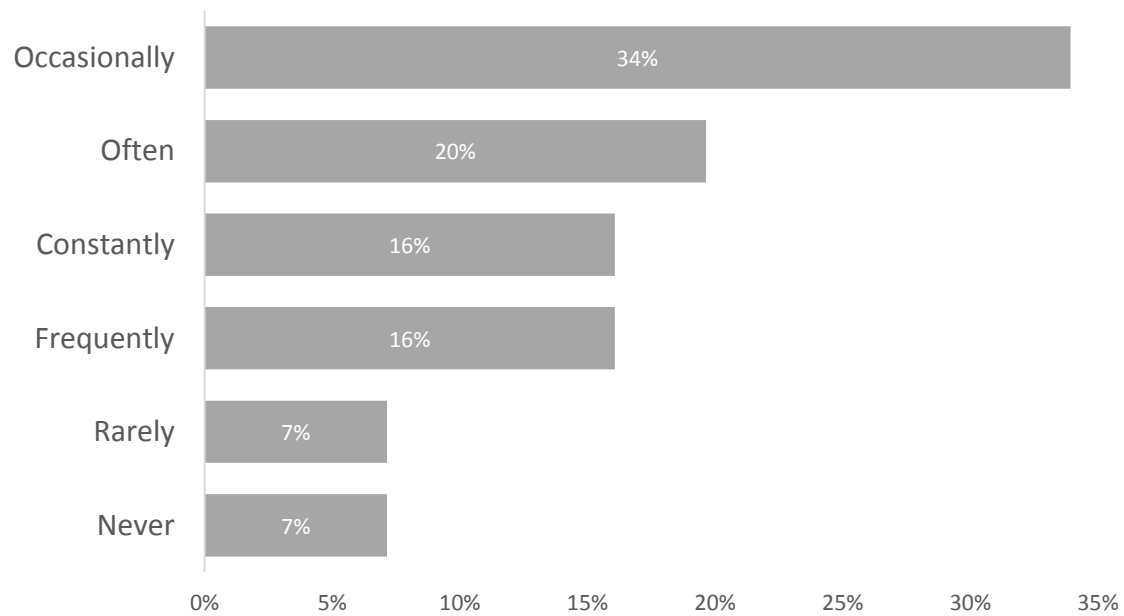


Table 1. Other Media Frequency and Type Used

Other Media Frequency	Other media type used
Never	No response provided
Never	No response provided
Never	No response provided
Often	Community marketing
Never	No response provided
Occasionally	Ads in local menus, theaters programs
Often	Newspaper and magazine ads
Often	Direct Mail twice a year.
Constantly	On line real estate listings
Constantly	Take very good care of the Press.
Often	Guerilla marketing/Street Team Community Outreach
Frequently	Networking
Occasionally	YouTube

Appendix IV

Figure 9.1 Use of Advertising Agencies

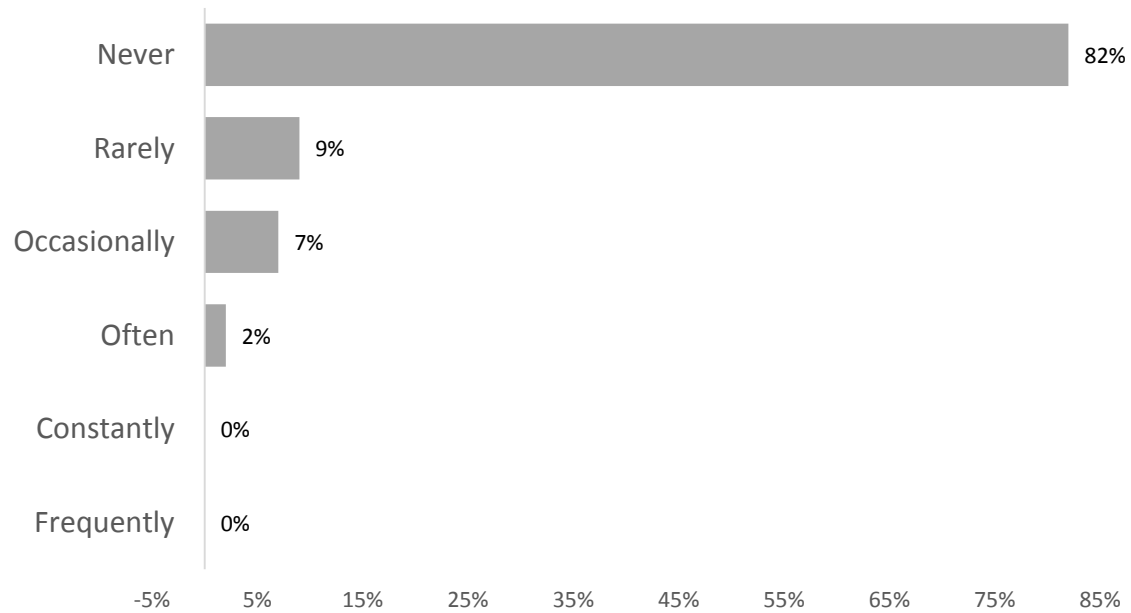


Figure 9.2 Use of Internal Meetings

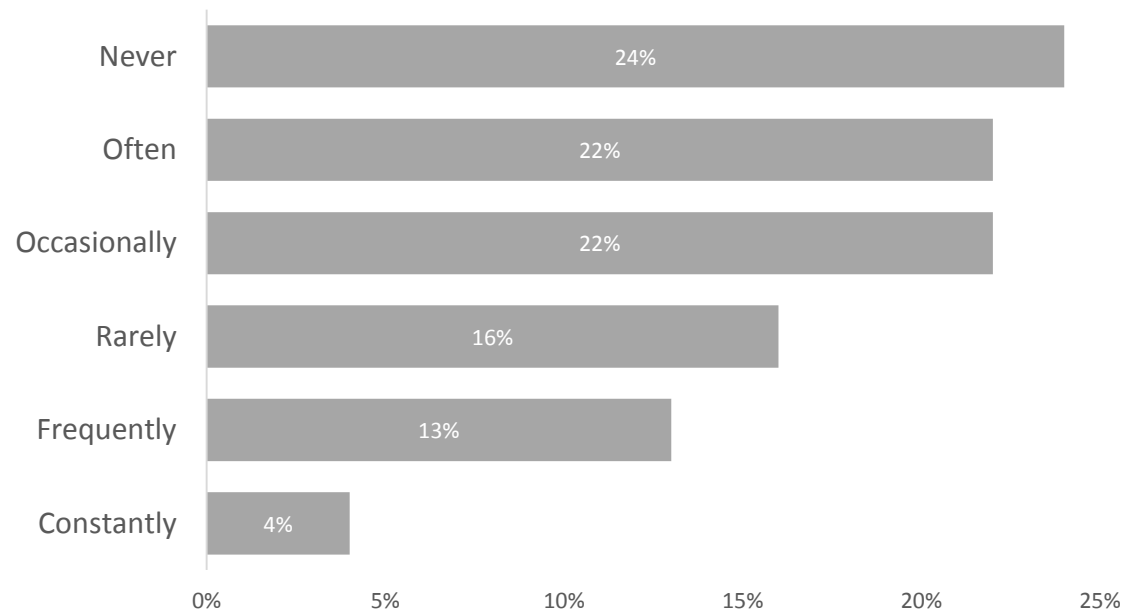


Figure 9.3 Use of Freelance Consultants

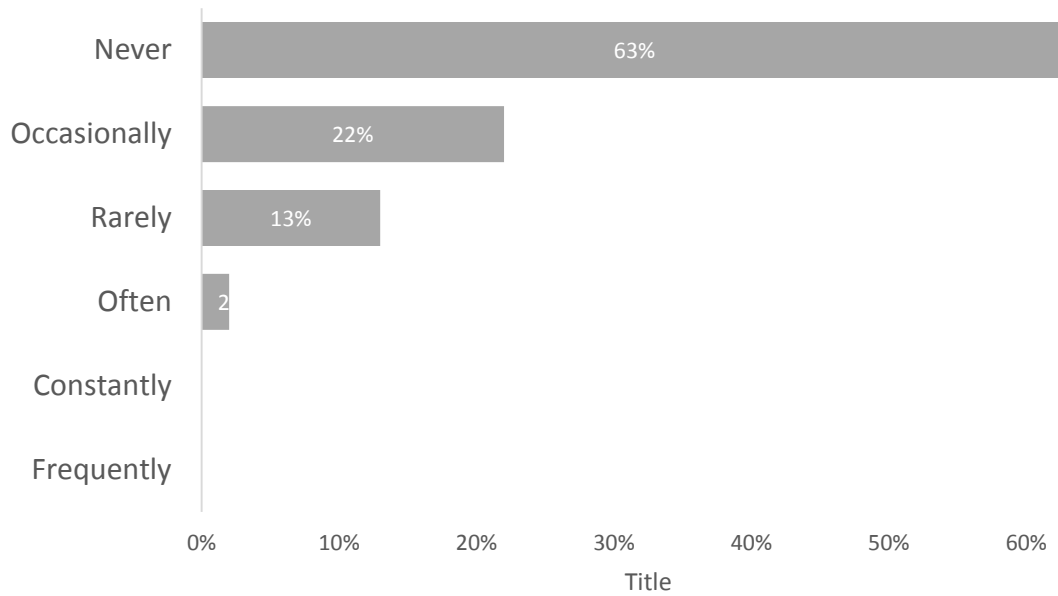


Figure 9.4 Use of In-House Marketing Departments

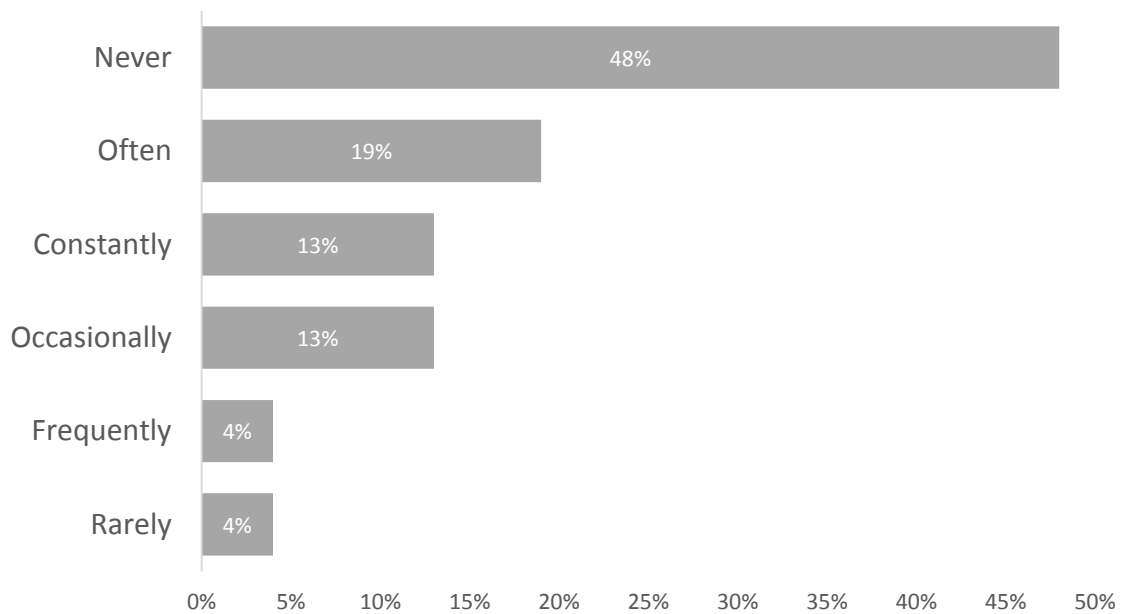
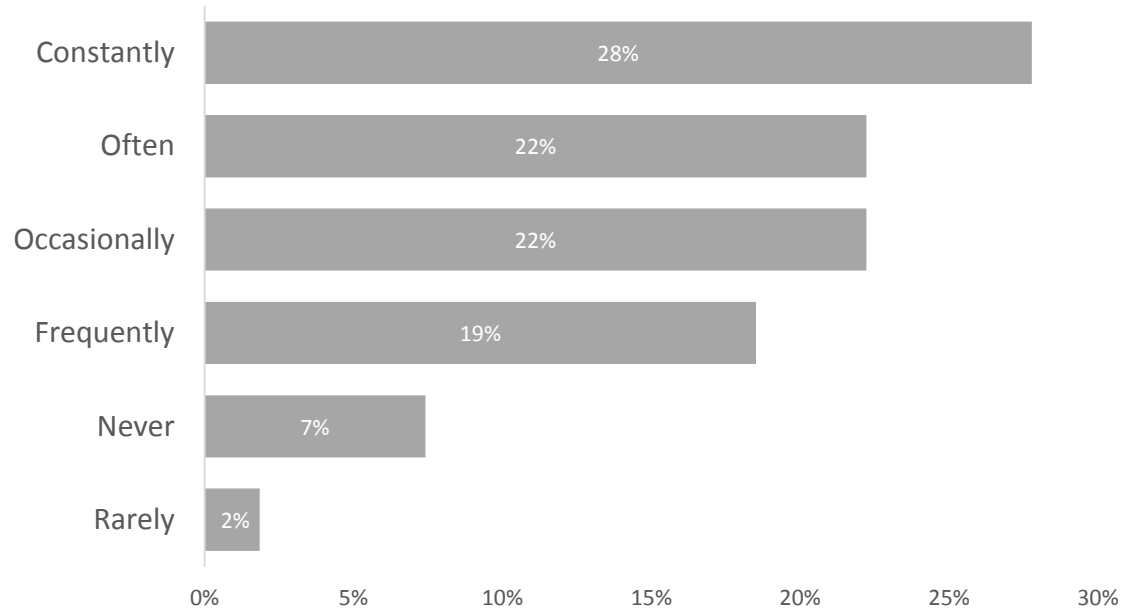


Figure 9.5 Usage of Personal Insight



Appendix V

Figure 8.1 Physical Documentation Usage

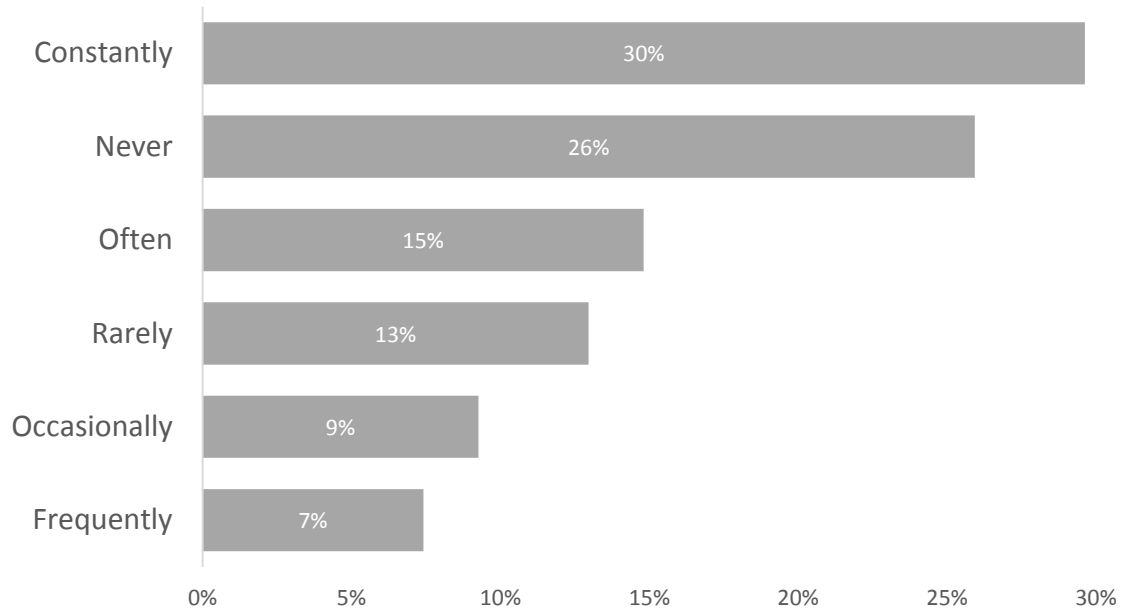


Figure 8.2 Usage of Physical Mailers/Newsletters

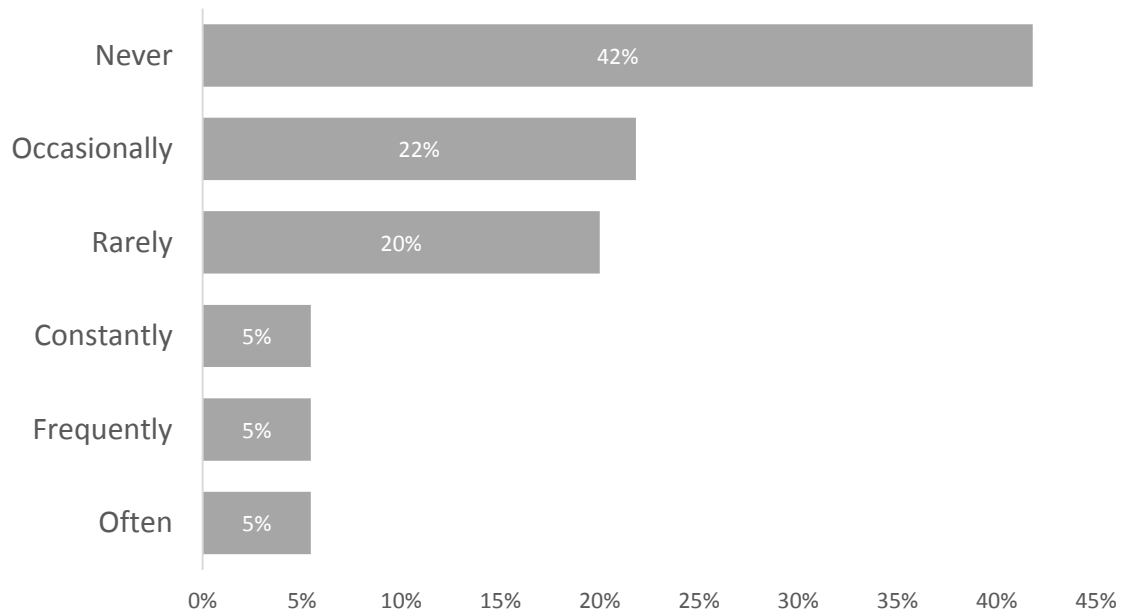


Figure 8.3 Usage of Digital Communication (Soc. Media/Email)

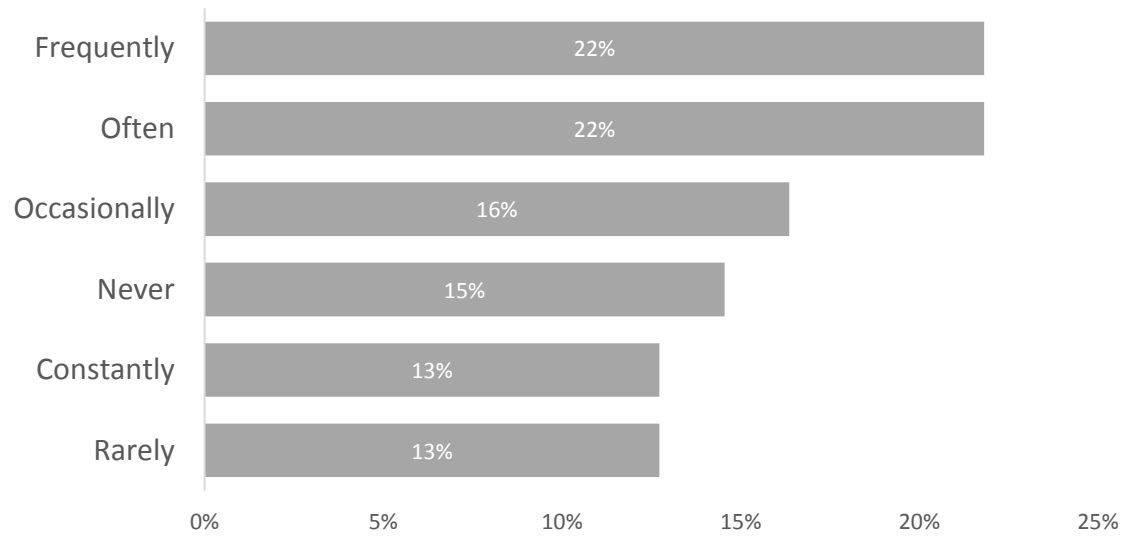


Figure 8.4 Usage of Word of Mouth

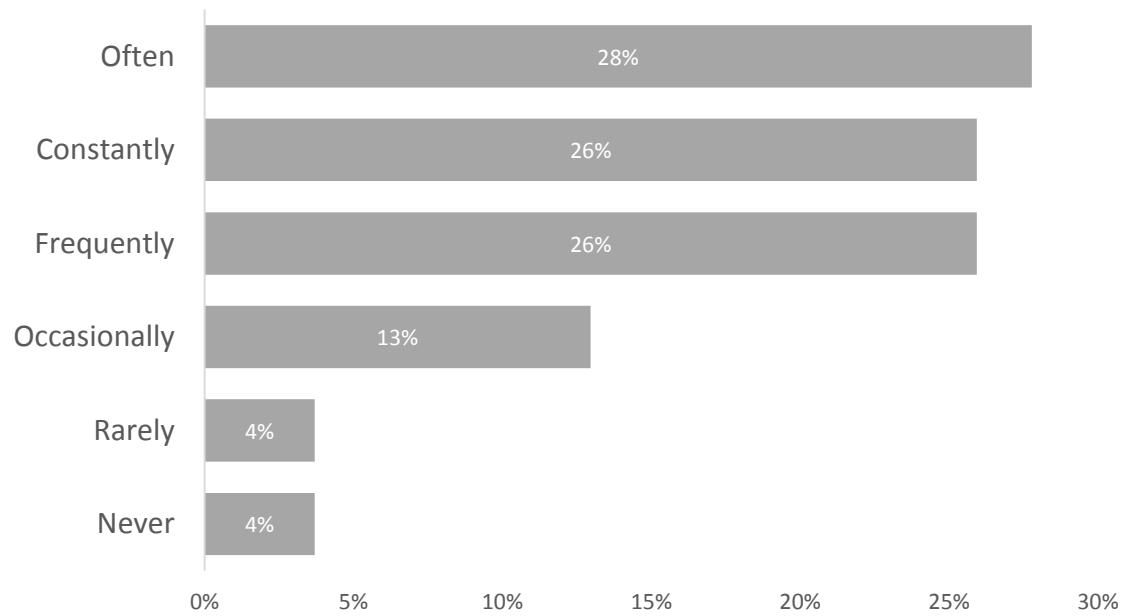


Figure 8.5 Usage of Referrals

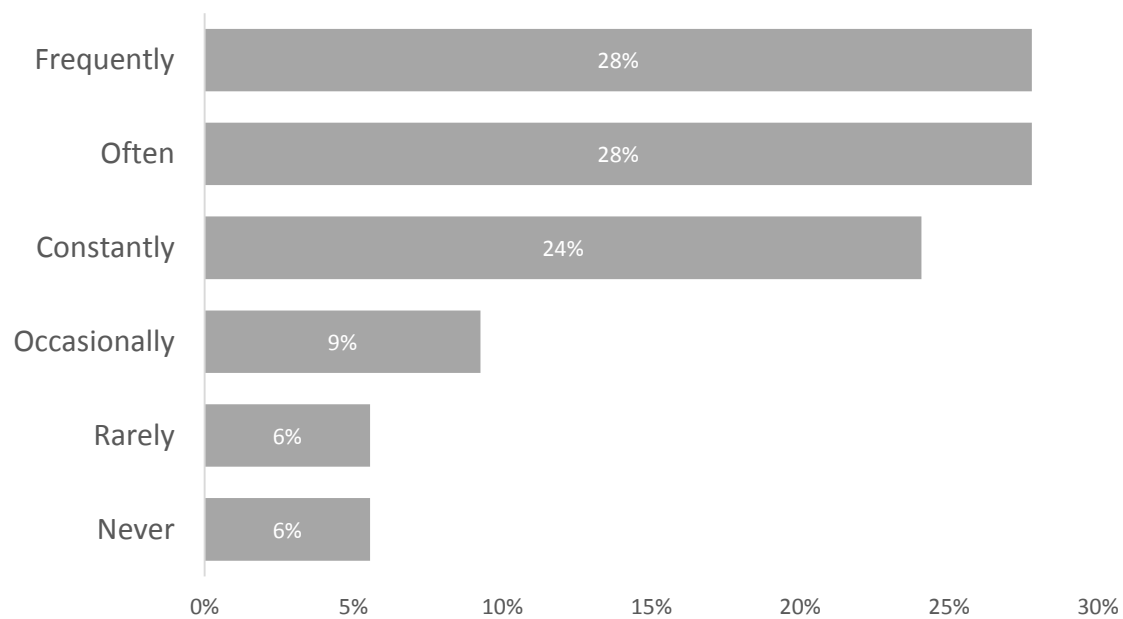
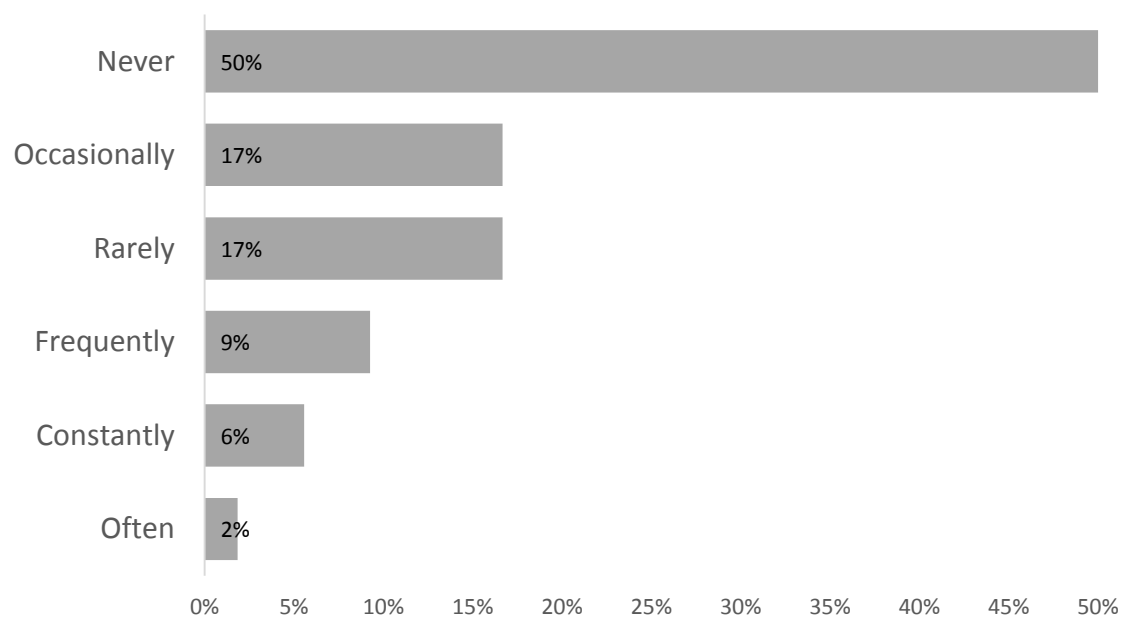


Figure 8.6 Usage of Purchase Lists



Appendix VI

Customer Growth and "Printed Materials"				
	Low	Medium	High	Total
Non Growth	13	4	4	21
% within Customer Base Growth	62%	19%	19%	100%
Growth	15	20	0	35
% within Customer Base Growth	43%	57%	0%	100%
Total	28	24	4	56
% within Customer Base Growth	50%	43%	7%	100%

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.063	2	.002
Likelihood Ratio	13.795	2	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	.711	1	.399
N of Valid Cases	56		

Appendix VII

Customer Growth and "Digital Communication"				
	Low	Medium	High	Total
Non Growth	9	9	3	21
% within Customer Base Growth	43%	43%	14%	100%
Growth	6	12	16	34
% within Customer Base Growth	18%	35%	47%	100%
Total	15	21	19	55
% within Customer Base Growth	27%	38%	35%	100%

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.256	2	.027
Likelihood Ratio	7.698	2	.021
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.095	1	.008
N of Valid Cases	55		

Appendix VIII

Years in Operation and "Social Media"				
	Low	Medium	High	Total
1 - 10 Years	3	2	9	14
% within Years in Operation	21%	14%	64%	100%
11 - 20 Years	4	9	2	15
% within Years in Operation	27%	60%	13%	100%
20 + Years	10	13	4	27
% within Years in Operation	37%	48%	15%	100%
Total	17	24	15	56
% within Years in Operation	30%	43%	27%	100%

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.511a	4	.006
Likelihood Ratio	13.770	4	.008
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.843	1	.005
N of Valid Cases	56		

Appendix IX

Years in Operation and "Personal Insight"					
		Low	Medium	High	Total
	1 - 10 Years	1	3	10	14
	% within Years in Operation	7%	21%	71%	100%
	11 - 20 Years	2	11	1	14
	% within Years in Operation	14%	79%	7%	100%
	20 + Years	2	10	14	26
	% within Years in Operation	8%	39%	54%	100%
	Total	5	24	25	54
	% within Years in Operation	9%	44%	46%	100%

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.931a	4	.012
Likelihood Ratio	14.905	4	.005
Linear-by-Linear Association	.189	1	.664
N of Valid Cases	54		

Appendix X

Years in Operation and "Purchase Lists"					
		Low	Medium	High	Total
	1 - 10 Years	8	0	5	13
	% within Years in Operation	62%	0%	39%	100%
	11 - 20 Years	11	4	0	15
	% within Years in Operation	73%	27%	0%	100%
	20 + Years	17	6	3	26
	% within Years in Operation	65%	23%	12%	100%
	Total	36	10	8	54
	% within Years in Operation	67%	19%	15%	100%

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.712a	4	.030
Likelihood Ratio	13.754	4	.008
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.634	1	.201
N of Valid Cases	54		